The Gift of a Most Treasured Memory – Tantur 2011

I had the honour of being the staff member from the Catholic Education Office who was sponsored to attend the Easter/Holy Week program at the Ecumenical Institute of Theological Studies in Tantur. Together with a group of teachers from our Catholic schools and the Catechist Coordinator selected for this year, Colleen Geldenhuys, we placed ourselves in an experience of a life time. I was also fortunate that my husband was able to join us as we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary earlier in the year.

There are many highlights I could share but what struck me most was the diversity and richness of the many cultures, the religions and the landscape that makes up this tiny nation. Politically things may be strained but I was touched by the warmth, the friendliness and the sense of gratitude of the local people.

As we visited many of the places mentioned in the Bible and as we walked along the same paths Jesus would have trodden, my eyes were constantly opened to new understandings. There are so many experiences that touched me: the cave where Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Lake of Galilee, the Mount of Olives, the River Jordan, Masada, the old city of Jerusalem – but the one of the most treasured is my experience of Holy Thursday.

After we attended the Mass of the Last Supper in the old city of Jerusalem, we walked down the Kidron valley to the

cont. page 2...
I am very grateful to Mr Ron Dullard and the Catholic Education Commission for giving me this great opportunity to visit the Holy Land. I would also like to thank my parish priest, Fr Peter Whitely, who graciously wrote a glowing reference in support of my work in the parish and also for his great encouragement to go, although this was with ‘tongue in cheek’ as he then had to find a replacement for me for four weeks! I would also like to thank my family for their prayers and support in getting me to Tantur.

It was a great experience, one which I will treasure for the rest of my life. It certainly has brought the Bible alive for me and deepened my faith. The lectures opened my eyes and heart to Jesus’ life and the lives of the Jews and Palestinians of the past and of today.

The best part for me was Galilee. It certainly is beautiful on the water and now I understand why Jesus spent so much time there. Floating in the Dead Sea was an unbelievable experience, one I encourage you all to go and do. I certainly admire Jesus for spending 40 days in the desert, as I could only cope for a couple of hours. It can get extremely hot there as the soil is more clay than sand; it is very dry with intense heat.

In conclusion, I encourage all of you to apply for this enrichment program whenever the opportunity is offered. Being Holy Land will certainly touch your life and give you a whole new understanding of the Bible. Thank you again to everyone who has made this wonderful opportunity possible for me.

Colleen Geldenhuys
My First Year

To make sense of what God wants for us in this life, we engage with others to spread God’s message as best we know how. Being asked to be the Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) Coordinator just over a year ago was at first very daunting to me, so I sought the assistance of my good friend Connie and together we took on the challenge.

I was uncertain about communicating God’s word accurately to all members of our community, especially children, but decided I would give all I had. I wanted to make sure I was not only there to enrich my own faith, but to support the Catechists to the best of my ability. I aimed for our PREP classes to be a continuing educational and effective source of implementing God’s word.

In the past our PREP classes took place at St Simon Peter Catholic Primary School. In 2011 we implemented a parish based sacramental program and bought our PREP office back to the church along with some of the classes. Father Darek and our Sacramental Coordinator Fran Beale encouraged PREP children and their families to attend Mass more often, especially around the time of the sacraments.

The families now have a closer link to the parish and the parish church.

I am hopeful yet confident that all of these positive changes will bring our Parish closer to making God the central part of our community. We continue to instil God’s word into the hearts of all the children enrolled in the PREP classes and encourage their families to become more involved in their children’s spiritual lives. We look forward to a bright future.

Sandy Coelho
PREP Coordinator, St Simon Peter, Ocean Reef

Happy Classrooms Good Behaviour

This inservice day was devoted to learning how best to achieve ‘happy classrooms and good behaviour’. Time was set aside to discuss individual concerns about classroom management and we also made a sample Classroom Rules chart.

The Catholic library has many classroom management resources that we can access for support in this area. We were able to watch a part of a DVD featuring Bill Rogers which explored ways to make a really positive start to the year with a class.

Happy Classrooms Good Behaviour is a very practical inservice which will be repeated in November. This year it is offered as a daytime or an evening class.

Christology

This two day course on Christology was highlighted by the stimulating discussions that were generated by the topic. Those who attended not only extended their knowledge and understanding but were able to share from their already substantial foundations in scripture and theology.

Christology was studied from both a biblical and theological point of view and a timeline of the development of Christology over the centuries was also discussed.

A part of the presentation included a slide show of Israel, the land that Jesus walked, and a video showing what the Temple may have been like in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus.
Bringing the Sacraments

St Simon Peter Parish comprises St Simon Peter Catholic Primary School, Currambine Catholic Primary School and Prendiville Catholic College. Alongside this runs the Parish Religious Education Program which caters for children in the local Government schools but also for any families from the Parish schools whose children may have missed the opportunity to celebrate the Sacraments.

Towards the end of last year, Carmel Suart was invited to St Simon Peter Parish to explain how to implement a parish based sacramental program that is also parent focused and school and PREP supported. The parish team that gathered to consider this implementation consisted of the Parish Priest, Fr Darek, Assistant Principals from both primary schools, the liturgy coordinator, the Co-Coordinators of PREP and Stephen Harris, a parish Catechist and member of the Catechist Service.

As a result of the meeting, Fr Darek, with the support of the team, sought the services of a paid, part-time Sacramental Coordinator. Mrs Fran Beale accepted this position and has worked tirelessly, employing her extensive pastoral and organisational skills to coordinate a program for Confirmation, Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Fran has ensured that families understand the importance of their role in the sacraments and of the importance of the parish context. As part of the preparation, families participate in one workshop and several masses.

Fr Darek has been very pleased with the way everything has progressed. The Sacraments are now being celebrated during regular Parish Masses which involve all the children regardless of where they have been prepared. Parents will now be able to celebrate First Holy Communion with their children at any Parish Mass of their choice during the month of September.

Winter Retreat Day

The term ‘heart’ is used today in reference to many images and sentiments. The ‘Home in the heart of God’ retreat helped me appreciate that our purpose in life is to listen to the voice of God deep in our hearts and fall into the abyss of God’s loving kindness. Then, in our stillness we learn how to love ourselves and others, create our personal happiness and for those around us, struggle with our human weaknesses, and ultimately become God-like and remain in and with God in eternity. ‘Make your home in me as I make my home in you.’ (John 15:4)

Roula Cummins
The Rock Climber and the Ant

A young woman was rock climbing with friends when she stopped for a rest on a ledge halfway to the top. As she was catching her breath the safety rope snapped against her eye and knocked out one of her contact lenses. ‘Great,’ she thought. ‘Here I am on a rock ledge, hundreds of feet from the bottom and hundreds of feet to the top of this cliff, and now my sight is blurry.’

To stop the panic rising in her, she began praying. She prayed for calm, to be safe and that she may find her contact lens. When she got to the top, a friend examined her face and her clothing for the lens, but it was not to be found. Although she was relieved to have arrived safely at the top, she was saddened because she could not clearly see the spectacular views. She thought of the words, ‘The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth to support those whose hearts are completely God’s (2 Chron 16:9).’ ‘Help me God,’ she prayed, ‘You can see these mountains. You know every stone and leaf and you know where my contact lens is. Help me find it.’

Later, when they had hiked down the trail to the bottom of the cliff they met another party of climbers just beginning the climb. One of them called out, ‘I don’t suppose any one of you has lost a contact lens?’ They stopped to look where he was pointing and were stunned to see an ant slowly moving across a twig carrying the lost contact lens.

That evening, when the young woman told the story to her father, he imagined the ant praying to God with the words, ‘Lord, I don’t know why you want me to carry this thing. I can’t eat it, and it’s awfully heavy. But if this is what you want me to do, I’ll carry it.’

When we have burdens that are seemingly inexplicable - perhaps, like the ant, we could pray, ‘God, I don’t know why you want me to carry this load. I can see no good in it and it’s awfully heavy, but, if you want me to carry it, I will. “For I can do all things through God who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).”’

(Retold from a story in the book, Keep a Quiet Heart, Elisabeth Elliot, 1995)
Remembering the Spirit

The current liturgical season, the season after Pentecost, focuses on the work of the Spirit in the Church. It is the longest liturgical season of the year and the one which represents the ‘ordinary’ life of the Church. But there is nothing ordinary about the work of the Holy Spirit in making us holy. This work requires our full cooperation and attentiveness.

It helps then to focus on who the Spirit is.

Tertullian, a second Century theologian used images from the natural world to help us understand the Holy Spirit within the communion of the Triune God. Using the analogy of the sun, Tertullian pointed out that there is the sun in the heavens (the Father), the sunbeam coming to earth (Christ), and the point of light where the sun connects with the earth and brings light and warmth (the Spirit). He uses the analogy of plants in a similar way: plants have a hidden root not obvious to the naked eye (the Father), a shoot coming out of the ground and into the world (Christ) and the plant itself bringing forth leaves, fruits and seeds (the Spirit).

These images present the Spirit as the first and most intimate way God can be experienced: God very close to us, creating, comforting, enlightening and blessing with fruitfulness.

The Council of Constantinople in 391 declared the Spirit to be the Lord and giver of life, and in unity with the Father and the Son, to be worshipped and glorified. Nonetheless we have a tendency to leave the Spirit in ‘third place’.

Perhaps like ‘breath’ the English word for the Latin ‘spirit’, the Holy Spirit is so essential and ever present that we hardly recognise that presence. Perhaps also the crucial role of the Spirit revealing the Father and Son leaves the Spirit’s own nature hidden. Furthermore, to be open to the Spirit’s movement and transformation is radically challenging as the early Christian community discovered. It can feel safer to ignore the Spirit’s prompting. After all, the images of wind, fire and water which Scripture uses for the Spirit are not only dynamic; they can be overwhelming and difficult to control.

However, if we read carefully the early accounts of the work of the Spirit in the Church we see how important it is for us as individuals and communities not to forget the Life-giving Spirit. We too need the movement of the Spirit in prayer that enables us to address God intimately as Abba; we need the Spirit’s gifts for our communities to flourish; we need to manifest, despite our human weaknesses, the fruits of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; we need the Spirit’s power as we seek to live and communicate our faith, face our suffering and mediate justice with courage. We need the unity of the Spirit – a unity that like the communion of the triune God – celebrates individual distinctiveness and gathers it into a symphony of goodness, beauty and truth.

Pina Ford

CHOGM Commonwealth Prayer Initiative

Project 54

The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting will be held in Perth in October 2011. This creates a rare opportunity for Western Australians to showcase their state to a worldwide audience and Premier Colin Barnett has asked for the ‘WA community to get right behind’ this.

In response, churches in Perth, including the Catholic Church, are uniting in prayer for the Commonwealth nations’ campaign. To our surprise and delight, this has snowballed in an extraordinary way to involve churches, not only in Perth, but also around the nation and the Commonwealth.

One Commonwealth goal is to promote peace and understanding between member nations. Project 54 is a way for children and youth to make a difference through prayer by way of the ‘adopt-a-nation’ scheme. The idea is to pray for one Commonwealth nation leading up to CHOGM in Perth. Talk to your Coordinator or Parish Priest if you want to become involved.

For further information visit the website and register your PREP group at: www.commonwealthprayer.org or contact Stephen Harris: harris.stephen@ceo.wa.edu.au
Holy Spirit eConference

This year’s eConference on the Holy Spirit was an enlightening set of talks by Rev. Dr Denis Edwards, Sr Janette Gray RSM, Mrs Jan Heath and Fr Chris Ryan MGL.

Using their individual experience and expertise, each presenter explored a different aspect of the Holy Spirit for the thousands of webcast viewers all over Australia and other countries such as the Philippines, England and New Guinea.

Here at the Catholic Education Centre, 17 Catechists and some students from ECU took part in discussions after each speaker’s presentation. eConferences are an excellent way to access and learn from expert presenters. The discussions that follow complement the learning and are an important part of the process.

The Next eConference is Following Jesus: Matthew.
Please check the back page of this Newsletter for details.

7 Ways to Help Prepare Your Child to Receive a Sacrament

1. Discuss and share memories of your child’s Baptism.
2. Read the Bible together.
3. Pray together before meals and at bedtime.
4. Give your child the opportunity to experience belonging to a faith community, especially by going to Sunday Mass.
5. Discuss the Sacrament your child is to receive and assist them in their understanding of it – you might deepen your own understanding of the Sacraments at the same time!
6. Give your child the opportunity to celebrate the Sacraments they have already received such as Reconciliation and the Eucharist.
7. Attend parent meetings and parent and child workshops in the weeks leading up to celebration of the Sacrament.

Here is a sacramental preparation idea made by the Holy Spirit PREP group in City Beach.
Priests’ and Coordinators’ Day

Living Hope: Fr Tom Ryan RSM

Fr Tom Ryan began by explaining that as human beings we form our identity through human relationships. The answer to ‘Who am I?’ is ultimately concerned with being recognised by others.

The work of neuropsychologists confirms this. When, for example, children’s connections with others are dominated by the internet, they live in a world of ‘virtual reality’ lacking in real empathy with other human beings and losing their own capacity for empathy.

Catechists, like Jesus, are teachers and also instruments of hope. They foster hope by being there, affirming and inspiring through the power of their witness. Only what is real can satisfy us and living hope is anchored in the real: the truth will set you free.

Paradoxically, our capacity for empathy and hope can be extended through art and the imagination. Art, like films, literature and the visual arts can nourish our hope by enabling us to identify with something bigger than ourselves. The stories of those who have survived the most impossible and inhuman events can nourish our hope as we recognise that there is a luminous goodness that can shine out of even the darkest circumstances. Fr Tom referred to stories where people stopped being victims, even though they could not change their circumstances. The simple but profound choices they made in otherwise utterly powerless situations enabled them to preserve their human dignity. The Jewish holocaust is a particularly rich source of stories of suffering endured with much moral dignity and integrity as indeed are the lives of ordinary Australians.

Fr Tom also spoke of the hopefulness inherent in the stories we hear of ‘paying it forward’. This phenomenon occurs when we share with others the good we ourselves have been blessed to have received, rather than the more common occurrence of ‘paying back’ – inflicting pain on others because of pain inflicted on us.

A particular focus of the presentation was the story of Immaculée Ilibagiza, a story that emerged out of the genocide in Rwanda. Immaculée spent three months hidden in a tiny room with eight others while the people of her village including her family were hacked to death. She asked...
Mary

Mary the mother of God and the mother of Jesus is central to our faith as Catholics and also to our role as Catechists. During the four week course, *Theology in the Classroom*, one workshop is devoted to exploring the Catholic Theology of Mary. During this workshop the participants all shared their earliest knowledge and memories of Mary.

Members of the group came from Australia, India, South Africa, Ireland, Nigeria, Goa, Mexico, Portugal, Sudan and Singapore and in our sharing we realised we had all developed a love and devotion for a ‘particular Mary’, that is: Our Lady of Lourdes, Fatima, Knock, Guadalupe, Mercy, Perpetual Help, Mt Carmel etc. Our personal attachments to Miraculous Medals, Scapulars (brown and green) and rosary beads had all strengthened our faith over the years.

Reflecting on this diversity we were led to look at what we might emphasise in our teaching as Catechists. We then looked at the four requirements of Pope Paul VI for the teaching of Mary today:

- teach Mary of the Gospels
- teach in ways that fits with the Church’s current liturgy
- bear in mind the ecumenical impact of what is taught
- teach facts and theology in ways that are suitable for children today.

By keeping to the program and content of the lessons in the *Truth Will Set You Free* we are confident that our teaching will fulfil the above requirements and thus the children will develop a deep love and commitment to Mary our Mother.

Sr Frances Hayes

Bishop Sproxton

We are grateful to Bishop Don Sproxton for attending the Priests’ and Coordinators’ day and addressing the matter of the baptism of children of non-Catholic parents. Bishop Sproxton encouraged a pastoral approach, pointing out that while it may not always be possible to clearly discern the motives for such requests for baptism, it is important not to turn people away.

Bishop Sproxton referred to a number of situations where children and young people with non-Catholic parents were welcomed into the Church. These subsequently flourished and their faith brought many blessings to their families and the whole Catholic community.

God to show her whether he existed and he did – the soldiers did not open the door. Immaculée surrendered her life to God, and God asked her to forgive the killers.

Those who have heard her tell this story, including her account of overcoming her natural desire for revenge and coming to a place of acceptance, are transfixed by the message it gives. There is a moral beauty in such stories that draws us to participate in their vision of hope. They transcend us as they lift us out of the narrow confines of ourselves, and they transform us as they linger in the memory and impact on how we perceive and respond to life.

As occurs in all stories, when we weep for those suffering in them, we are also weeping for ourselves. Furthermore, Fr Tom pointed out that as we contemplate the victims of history, we also contemplate the Victim of history. The crucified and risen Lord is present there, confirming that his pattern of death and rising is also present with us.

Living hope then is not a human creation but a God given future. We are called to cooperate with God in this work of hope.
Here I am …

Two years ago I decided to volunteer to help with the Parish Religious Education classes after being invited by the priest and the Catechist Coordinator. The call sounded quite urgent. The more I thought about the priest’s call, the more I felt drawn to the job that would enable me to do a bit more for God and his church.

Why did I decide to help with the catechism classes? First of all I thought there was a real need for help in this ministry. Some people had been doing this for years and could use a break. Second I had years of teaching and school psychology experience which are relevant to this work. Third I had time to spare, as I was working part-time and my health was/is good.

During the first year I was the support person for the teacher in Year 3. I came every week, observed, and listened, and sometimes participated in the discussion as I saw fit. I was able to look through the teaching files which contained teacher reflections, lesson plans and worksheets. The materials seemed interesting and easy to understand. Occasionally I would be asked to fill in when the regular teacher was unavailable.

Then this year, when I had fully retired from work and I was still keen to continue, new Catechist Coordinators took over. Some of last year’s teachers could no longer continue teaching and I found myself assigned to the Eucharist group, Year 4-5 students.

I cannot be a missionary to hundreds in Haiti or in Peru but my calling is not for those faraway places exotic as they may be and perhaps more needful of apostolic work. What I hear is a call to do what I can where I am in this little corner of the world with these few children who need to learn how to be good and happy as they build a relationship with God/Jesus. I don’t feel called to be a powerful mover and shaker in the church but in my parish there is a humble job for me to do with the Lord’s help right here right now.

Here I am Lord.

Belen Robles
Yangebup Parish

St Anthony’s PREP Banner

A special banner was made by the St Anthony’s PREP Catechists that was used in the entrance procession for Commissioning Masses and will be used on other special occasions in the parish, such as the St Anthony’s Day procession.
When I first began teaching The Truth Will Set You Free program I did not receive any direction, but because my first topics were Lent and Easter, it seemed pretty straightforward. When I was told that my two young Catechist colleagues had enrolled for the Initial Formation Course Part 1 at the Catholic Education Office, the idea of having some training excited me. If they could make time for this with all their domestic duties I certainly could!

Attending the training sessions at the CEO has been the best thing that happened to me this year, for this Catechist work and for my personal spiritual growth. The course could not be any better planned: time for the catechists’ faith development/renewal, and time for us to acquire the knowledge and teaching skills to deliver the content in the mandated programs.

The speakers were excellent and their topics just what I needed for this time in my life: Images of God, Spirituality, Moral Theology, Liturgy etc. The lecturers were so good that one and a half hours did not seem long enough to satisfy my hunger for renewed knowledge and understanding of the faith and how to live it out. Our particular class had participants from various countries – South Africa, Bolivia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and from other parishes in the metro area. Everyone seemed just as eager as myself to be spiritually nourished and to nourish others by sharing ideas, life experiences and insights.

The classroom was set up meticulously so as to create an environment conducive to contemplation and learning. I loved the prayers and the forms they took, the meditative music and the prayer focus – simple reminders of the sacred and the divine. Michele and Stephen were always there when we arrived; they greeted us warmly, saw to our needs and knew exactly what was to happen next and how to direct us. Cuppas were available on arrival and during the break. In the winter season how else could we have survived! Then, too, the sharing and the discussions were always lively and interesting; credits to the facilitators who made it safe for us to tell our stories, express out doubts, ask questions and wonder out loud.

The second session each week was about the actual program files: the content of the lessons at various levels and the procedures recommended. We soon got to know the curriculum and also had practice in lesson planning. These training sessions re-energised us spiritually, clarified our role as Catechists and highlighted the value of the work we do. Getting to know the Catholic library was another good outcome for me.

I believe parishes need to encourage and support attendance at this catechist training course. It makes the volunteer better prepared to deliver the teaching program and, at the same time, it enhances his/her growth in the faith.

Belen Robles
Yangbup Parish
Teaching Tip

Reading Scripture

Ten points to remember when using scripture in PREP lessons:

1. Give the bible pride of place on your prayer table next to the candle.
2. Lift it reverently; read and replace reverently.
3. Always read from the bible first, then retell in your own words for younger children.
4. With older children, first read the text aloud, allowing them to listen to the Word of God before reading the text for themselves.
5. Scripture passages always occur in Lessons 2, as well as in many of the lessons in 3 and 4. Do not omit them.
6. Read only the verses prescribed in each lesson. They have been carefully selected.
7. Always allow time to discuss the reading. Use the questions in the lesson plan.
8. Do not introduce any other scripture passages.
10. Children’s bibles should only be used for their illustrations.

TERM 3, 2011

Leadership Course (Spirituality)

Date: Fridays 2, 9 and 16 September
Time: 9.30 – 3.00 pm
Venue: G4 Catholic Education Centre

Parish Based Course (Theology of the Human Person – Theology)

Date: Mondays 5 September – 26 September
Time: 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
Venue: Sts John & Paul Parish Centre, Willetton

TERM 4, 2011

Enhancing Your Teaching Skills: Drama (Religious Education)

Date: Wednesday 12 October (AM)
Time: 9.30 am – 2.30 pm
OR
Date: Wednesday 12 October and Thursday 13 October (PM)
Time: 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
Venue: G6 Catholic Education Centre

Companions in Hope (Spirituality)

Date: Thursday 27 October and Friday 4 October
Time: 9.30 am – 1.00 pm
Venue: G4 Catholic Education Centre

INITIAL FORMATION – PART 2

Scripture in the Classroom (Commissioning or Scripture)

Date: Wednesdays 19 October – 9 November
Time: 9.30 am – 1.00 pm
OR
7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
Venue: G7 Catholic Education Centre

Happy Classrooms Good Behaviour – REPEAT (Religious Education)

Date: Wednesday 16 November
Time: 9.30 am – 2.30 pm
OR
Date: Wednesday 16 November and Thursday 17 November
Time: 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
Venue: G6 Catholic Education Centre

COORDINATORS’ NETWORK EVENING

Date: Wednesday 23 November
Time: 6.00 pm (Mass)
6.30 – 9.00 pm (Dinner)
Venue: Catholic Education Centre

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