

A CALL TO ASSEMBLY '09

Issue 1
May 2009

*"This is my
Body
This is my
Life.
Broken for
you.
Do this in
memory of
me."*

Bishop Brian invites us to prepare

Have you ever been to your Church, or another Church as a visitor and not been welcomed, or felt welcome?

Have you every left your parish celebration of the Eucharist without having spoken to anyone. I know it sometimes happens and it is very sad. It may not be intentional, but it highlights one of the really essential experiences we need – *hospitality*.

So it is, in proposing this first edition of "Call to Assembly", we have chosen *hospitality* as the theme, to remind ourselves that we cannot be the people of God unless we relate to each other with respect and warmth. It is, I believe, more than anything, an attitude of our mind and heart and my fervent hope is that we prepare for our Assembly, celebrate it and carry it into the future, with the solid basis of genuine hospitality.

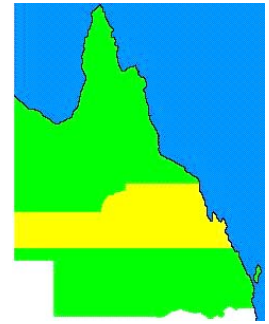
Prayer is essential to ensure that we are in touch with our good and gracious God. Again, I invite you to pray our Assembly Prayer every day, around midday if possible. I have no doubt that God's Spirit will guide us as we prepare, celebrate and then move forward from our Assembly.

I commend to your reflection, the fine thoughts Joe McCorley shares with us in the first edition. Take time to read it slowly and, like myself, find real encouragement through Joe's words.

God bless you all with a spirit of peace and *hospitality*.



Brian Heenan
Bishop of Rockhampton



**Catholic
Diocese of
Rockhampton**

Assembly Prayer

*"Loving God, we ask you to send
your Holy Spirit
to come upon us in new ways,
as we prepare for our
Diocesan Assembly 2009.*

*We pray that we may become
the people you want us to be.*

*May our hopes and dreams be in harmony
with your plans for our future.*

*Give us the privilege
to proclaim your good news
to all people and the courage
to speak and act in your name.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.
St Joseph, Patron of our Diocese, pray for us.
Blessed Mary MacKillop, pray for us.*

HOSPITALITY

Have you somewhere to stay tonight?"

It was late one afternoon in the Christmas holidays. Our grandson, Josh, had decided to take his bed and walk from our place to his cousin's around the corner. In a somewhat dishevelled state, with a pillow under one arm and a backpack slung over his shoulder, he was stopped in his tracks:

"G'day, are you okay? Have you somewhere to stay tonight? We have a spare bedroom, if you'd like to stay with us." Looking up, Josh met the concerned gaze of an unknown couple, who were reaching out to him with genuine care and concern.

As Josh later told us the story we could tell he had been really affected by the experience. Why would anyone reach out to a stranger, especially a 14 year old rebel whose demeanour was probably very uninviting.

That experience had a profound effect on Josh. He had an experience of genuine hospitality. Was it a reflection of the hospitality of God as revealed by Jesus Christ?

The Hospitality of God

Hospitality for us brings to mind invitations to meals, 'come and have a drink,' welcoming guests and visitors, reaching out to others,

providing a place to stay, and making people feel at home.

The Gospel of Luke, or the Hospitality of God, as Brendan Byrne SJ suggests, sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as "visitation" on God's part to the world.

How will this guest, visitor be received? Will he be accepted or rejected? As we read the Gospel, we find Jesus is accepted, but often by people not accepted in their own community, including tax collectors like Zaccheus and Levi, sinners like the adulterous women, the poor, disabled and outcasts of society.

We also know Jesus suffered rejection at the hands of some members of his family, some scribes and Pharisees and some church leaders of the time.

The hospitality of God, as revealed by Jesus, was about acceptance rather than judgement. He showed us how acceptance becomes welcome, a hand held out to the afflicted, the trapped, the bound, and the marginalised. Jesus also showed us that the one who brings the "acceptance" of God will find acceptance in surprising quarters and a great measure of "non-acceptance" in others.

In "Begin with the Heart" Daniel O'Leary portrays Jesus as "the first to reveal the true meaning at the



Remember to Pray

- ① Set the alarm on your digital watch/mobile phone
- ② Mark the prayer time in your diary/computer calendar
- ③ Set your alarm clock at home for midday



Prayer Intentions

We pray that:

- ✚ Hospitality will be our priority
- ✚ The gift of sharing will be widespread
- ✚ Jesus' welcoming love will be enjoyed by many
- ✚ prayer is part of everyday, for all



Prayer Resources @

<http://www.yenra.net/catholic/prayers/>

<http://www.pray-as-you-go.org>

<http://www.mercyworld.org/reflections/>

*** Hospitality * Witnessing to the "Good News" of the Kingdom**

A CALL TO ASSEMBLY 2009

Hospitality (continued)

heart of the works of his Father. He himself was the walking sacrament of God's infinite compassion."

Jesus was the face of the hospitality of God. Hospitality was highlighted in the Wedding Feast of Cana, in the parables about feasts and banquets, in his table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners. Even after the resurrection, with the travellers to Emmaus, our "eyes are opened" to the hospitality of Jesus as the guest becomes the host to the travellers.

We travel our journey of life in gratitude to the hospitality of God.

The biblical scholar, Dr Tom Wright, teaches that the community Jesus preached was all about a glorious, uproarious, absurd generosity. He provides instructions that have a fresh springlike quality, reflecting new life bursting through:

Think of the best thing you can do for the worst person... and go ahead and do it!

Think of what you would like people to do for you, and do it for them.

Can we accept the hospitality of God? Can we share this hospitality with all others in our lives?

Hospitality and the Worshipping Community

The ministry of hospitality is essential to the community that comes together to worship God each Sunday. As we come together we make room in our hearts and our lives for our fellow-worshippers.

In this context, hospitality is much more than simple good manners and friendliness. It is to recognise and greet the face of Christ in our brothers and sisters with the same reverence shown to Christ as real presence in the tabernacle.

Our churches will always remain special places for quiet devotional prayers. However, when the community gathers for public worship, it connects in social, human ways before joining in common prayer and worship. Such hospitality responds to Vatican II

and calls from recent Popes for a "new evangelisation" characterised by outreach, welcoming and pro-active initiatives.

The God of hospitality is to invite all into our Catholic imagination and experience of Christ who is truly present in the community that gathers, in the presider, in the Word, in the Eucharist, and in each parish ministry.

Archbishop John Bathersby writes: "Communion is at its most intense in the Church when the Church gathers as the Body of Christ in Eucharist. We and all creation are caught up in the Trinitarian relationship of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit - a love that could not be contained, but overflowed through Jesus Christ into our world. Within the mystery of Eucharist, Jesus dies so that we might live. He poured out his life so we may find new life so that we can live in community. Words weren't enough. He gave himself.



*"This is my Body
This is my Life . Broken for you.
Do this in memory of me."*

Is this our haunting call to hospitality?

Hospitality begins within

The heart of hospitality resides within the heart of each person.

It is the hospitality of God who carries our heart in Christ. This hospitality is a gift we receive from the Spirit of the Risen Christ. We accept this gift in

gratitude through our personal relationship with Christ. Through grace, we share this hospitality with others.

What prevents us from reaching out in hospitality to others?

I would suggest the answer to this question is fear! Do we fear rejection? Do we fear dominance? Do we fear hostility? Do we fear arrogance? Are we afraid of being humbled? [Luke 14:8-11] Hospitality has a real connection to the virtue of humility: "out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others." [Phil 2:3-4] Rabbi Jonathan Sacks proposes that true humility is one of the most life-enhancing of all virtues. It does not mean under-valuing or underestimating yourself. It does mean valuing other people. False humility is the pretence that one is small. True humility is the consciousness of standing in the presence of greatness - the greatness of self and others, all loved into life as beloved of God.

True humility means acceptance of a faith that will conquer the fear of reaching out to others. We need to connect with other people, to understand them. When we stand back analysing and coolly calculating, we will never really know a person. It is only in stepping out, giving ourselves to a person, that a person can speak to us. This is encapsulated in the beautiful lyrics from Les Miserables: *.. to love another person is to see the face of God."*

And the secret is, as St Paul writes, "that Christ is in you. [Col 1:27] We need to take time in prayer to connect with the source of life, the source of all hospitality, Jesus Christ.

In this way we achieve our true identity characterised as an exhilarating journey towards the freedom of true experiences in the Spirit:

It is freeing oneself from fear!

It is freeing oneself to be surprised.

It is freeing oneself to love wholeheartedly!

It is freeing oneself to be hospitable!

Joe McCorley

Everyday Hospitality Tips

At Home

- Invite someone to share a meal

At Work

- Greet your colleagues and/ or visitors with a smile—offer to make a cuppa for someone.

At School

- Talk about ways you can practise hospitality in your daily life and make one small act of hospitality

Chat Points

- Think back to when you last offered hospitality to someone.
- When was the last time you appreciated hospitality offered to you?
- Think back on how you felt when someone seemed to careor didn't care.
- How can you offer hospitality in your worshipping community?

May Diary

- ✂ 03 World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- ✂ 10 Mothers' Day
- ✂ 17 Sanctity of Life Sunday
- ✂ 24 Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians
- ✂ 24 Ascension Day
- ✂ 24-31 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Download this and future issues of *A Call to Assembly*, along with other Diocesan Assembly 2009 materials from the diocesan website www.rock.catholic.net.au