

NAFSCC E-Newsletter

North American Forum on Small Christian Communities

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Happy Thanksgiving to All

The NAFSCC E-Newsletters sent bi-monthly to members

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1. News and Ideas

NAFSCC and NAPRC Collaboration on the Summer Conference

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NAFSCC Board Co-Chair

The NAFSCC joined the National Alliance for Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC) for their annual conference “*The Church Alive and Well: Parish SCCs Staying the Course.*” The conference was held July 29-31 at St. Michael Parish in Poway, California. The conference followed a sailing theme which was woven into the title of all of the workshops.

It was a rich experience because of the interaction of diocesan staff persons, parishioners, and parish staff members. There were workshops lead by NAFSCC members as well as NAPRC members. NAFSCC members who lead workshops were Diane Kledzick: *Finding a Safe Harbor for All; Small Church Communities and Social Justice*, Br. Robert Moriarty, SM: *Launching Into the Deep; Deepening the Experience of Small Communities*, Sr. Nancy Fischer, SSJ & Mrs. Kathy Higgins; *Maiden Voyage: Open Forum for Beginners*, Sr. Patricia Froning, OSF: *Strengthening the Prayer Life of Small Communities* and Sr. Donna L. Ciangio, OP *Dropping Anchor: Adult Formation and Small Communities: Sharing the Great Tradition.*

The highlight of the conference was Bishop Gerald Barnes of the Diocese of San Bernardino who was the very energizing keynote speaker throughout all of Friday. His theme was “*Staying the Course.*” We met with him three times to listen and dialogue on theological and pastoral aspects of small communities. The following is an outline of his input.

STAYING THE COURSE

Most Reverend Gerald Barnes

Diocese of San Bernadino

July 30, 2004

Be Pro-Active

To develop SCCs, we need to do some Pro-Active Tasks that involve

- Knowing where we are headed – plan – vision
- Preparing the Crew – getting everyone online with the vision
- Keeping the Course – moving ahead

Being Pro-Active means...

Bishop Barnes amplified each point by adding practical hints gleaned from his experience of SCCs in the diocese:

Knowing Where We Are Headed

There are four values of the diocese for SCCs to model:

1. Be a Welcoming/Hospitable Community with a Strong Identity
 - ◇ Make it an identity of the Catholic Church
 - ◇ Make it an identity in our family
 - ◇ Make it an identity with neighbors/strangers

To illustrate the need for welcoming, hospitality, and identity, Bishop Barnes told the story of a man who decided to wear his hat to church one Sunday.

As the man came in the usher said to him, “Sir, your hat!”

“Thank you!” said the man.

As he went up to receive Communion the extraordinary minister said, “Sir, your hat!” “Thank you!” and “Amen” said the man.

As he came out of church still wearing the hat, the priest said, “Hello sir, how are you? By the way, Catholic men don’t wear hats in church.”

The man said, “You are the first priest to speak to me in 6 years of coming to this parish and no one else has spoken to me until today when I wore my hat all through Mass! Thank you!”

2. Be Reconcilers

- ◇ Between priests and bishops
- ◇ Between women and church
- ◇ Between all cultural groups

3. Be People Who Share Their Faith

- ◇ At all meetings in diocese/parish
- ◇ With the desire to know Christ in a much deeper relationship

4. Be People of Collaboration

- ◇ Using the gifts of the people
- ◇ Working together
- ◇ Understanding what it means to be good stewards of our church

Preparing the Crew

- Our understanding of leadership needs to be re-formed and leaders need to be formed.
- Communication is the key value to help our church truly communicate with each other and all segments
- Formation is essential – and we need to be a listening church
 - ◇ What people need
 - ◇ How they “hear” the Word and mission of the church
 - ◇ San Bernadino has a certificate program course for those who coordinate ministries in the parish
 - ◇ We need to understand the different generations we minister to in parishes

Keeping the Course

- We need to develop a sense of mission among people and the SCC can help
- The SCC can also help people be excited about evangelization – welcome and hospitality
- The Diocese of San Bernardino emphasizes Justice, Service, and Adult Formation in the SCCs
- It also develops an ownership of the diocesan vision

Fire And Passion

Bishop Barnes asked us to reflect with each other on fire and passion. “Where is your fire? What is your passion? How is your passion lived out?” This produced a very lively discussion among all of the participants!

After we reflected on our passion, Bishop Barnes spoke about community – beginning and ending with Christ. In order to truly understand and form community we need to see and become Christ. How we strive to see and become

Christ for each other will determine the way we are able to form community of any depth. As believers, we need to look at one another with the eyes of faith and the love of Christ.

Bishop Barnes also made the point that we need to find ways to reclaim spirituality that is real not just what some think is reverence. Because of differing ecclesiologies that have grown up in the church, people often find themselves at odds with each other over outward expressions rather than trying to understand the depths of spirituality and holiness. A good resource for SCCs (indeed the whole Church) to reflect on is the spirituality of “Communio” in so many of the writings of Pope John Paul II rather than judging outward styles of devotion.

Three Ways To Develop A Spirituality Of Communion

Bishop Barnes suggested three ways to develop a spirituality of communion

1. Contemplating the Trinity which will help us understand how God is living in us
2. Understanding that we are all we are all brothers and sisters in Unity – The Mystical Body is a part of me and I of the whole body.
3. Make room for others through the practice of welcoming and hospitality.

Be Re-Active

We also need to be Re-active, which means constantly

- Checking the weather – What is the climate?
- Adjusting the course – making the necessary changes

Being Re-Active means...

This was very interesting – Bishop Barnes played the theme from the movie “Titanic” and did a guided reflection about what people see in their minds when they remember the movie. Some remember the deck chairs falling, some the boat splitting in two, others saw the dishes crash, some remember the tragedies of the people trapped on the lower decks as well as the first class passengers resigned to the inevitable.

Rather than preparing for the unforeseen, the Titanic ran straight into the iceberg in its haste to win a speed record. All people could do was run about trying to figure out what to do. The ship and crew were not prepared for anything to go wrong – neither psychologically nor with the proper equipment! We should not be caught that way but rather be intentional in our efforts to unite people so that the mission of Christ can be foremost.

Check The Weather

It is essential for church leaders to be conscious of others and know how they are doing, how they are reacting, evaluating, deepening their spirits and more. We need to be attentive to the voices of our parishioners.

• Adjust The Course And Make Necessary Changes

After listening, we must be prepared to make necessary change if people are not feeling that they are growing in communion and deepening their faith, and taking part in leadership or ministerial roles. Maybe we are not inviting them. This may be especially true of how we are/are not ministering to younger generations.

Marks of a Vital Parish

In San Bernardino, Parishes are asked to evaluate themselves on how well they pay attention and develop their

- Pastoral Outreach - A parish is alive as seen in its pastoral outreach
- Finances & Administration – if they are fine and healthy
- Leadership Development – if there is development of new leaders
- Catechetical Life - through evangelization, RCIA, and adult faith formation
- Worship is Alive – people are coming because they are being fed
- Community Building - new and strong relationships are built through intentional efforts at welcome and hospitality in all areas of parish life
- Collaboration with society – by experiencing others who are not comfortable because the Gospel never leaves us comfortable!
- Keep a Sense of Humor - don't lose it!

As diocesan directors and those who work with leaders of the church in the United States and Canada, we found Bishop Barnes input and recommendations very supportive. I heard many people say that they felt “refreshed”, “energized”, “hopeful”, “feeling like they were on the right course”, and very excited to meet a bishop with the experience of and appreciation of and dedication to the development of small faith communities.

The NAFSCC thanks the NAPRC

for generously sharing the planning and experience of the conference with us. It was a great effort at collaboration!

We welcome comments and items for inclusion in future E-Newsletters. Please submit items to be considered for inclusion or responses to post questions to: DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us.

2. Upcoming Events

NCCL Convention April 10-14, 2005 at Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky

NAPRC (National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities) Conference July 28-31, 2005, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Cinnaminson, New Jersey. Keynote speaker: Ronald Rolheiser OMI, with small group workshops.

Buena Vista Convocation August 4-7, 2005, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota
Theme: *Creating Communities of Hope: Making a Difference in Our World*. Keynote speakers: Mike Cowan, Felicia Wolf, Jose Marins, followed by small group workshops and workshops in Spanish.

National Pastoral Life Center Annual Parish Convention
Spirituality and the Parish, Keynote: Ron Rolheiser, OMI Conference
November 17-19, 2005, Radisson Hotel, Ft. Worth, Texas

NAICE (North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization) Conference July 12-15, 2006, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio

3. Share Your Views

Small Christian Communities: A Challenge for Spiritual Growth

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When I read about the early church in Paul's letters and in Acts, I am joyful that we are once again able to gather in small communities to celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ and share with each other both the joy and the pain that accompany the realization of our faith. I have been and continue to be with two communities, one connected with my parish, and one with The Pastoral Center in Las Cruces, where I work. Both communities are very different, and yet still have many commonalities. Among those commonalities are an awareness that Jesus is among us when we meet and an acceptance of certain guidelines which keep us from straying into too much random chatter and keep us respectful of each person's right to be heard and responsibility to listen.

Our first action is always prayer, then reading the scripture passage, then discussion. The really strengthening part for the group is that the scripture reading gives us the springboard from which to relate its message to our own lives and that of those around us. I have found in both groups that people are supportive and encouraging towards those with painful situations to tell without

attempting to solve their problems. Only Jesus can heal! But then, we usually (and rightly so) move on to the larger social justice issues that such stories teach us. We discuss what we can do as a group and as individuals to tackle some of those issues albeit in small ways. We always end with a prayer during which we commit ourselves to change things. Two years ago, our small community at The Pastoral Center organized a drive to collect food and cleaning supplies for a group of sisters in our area from Mexico. They lived on virtually nothing, yet were committed in their desire to help the poor of the area. We decided to help them and the boxes of goods donated were delivered during one of our staff retreats. How special that was! For in helping them, we were helping ourselves to grow spiritually. That, I believe, is the strength of the small Christian community.

I believe strongly in the immeasurable importance of these communities. It allows the message of the weekly mass to become an integral part of the people in such a way as to change the lives of others in our community. The gospel truly becomes “good news” to our brothers and sisters in Christ. When a small community makes Jesus the center and hub of their group the power is unbelievable and the faith it grows is as the mustard seed. The force of the Holy Spirit knows no limitations when we ask Jesus to take control.

Year of the Eucharist: A Diocesan Invitation

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The Year of the Eucharist: an invitation to combine prayer and charitable commitment

The Pope has left the initiative of how to celebrate this **Year of the Eucharist** to the particular churches. There will be **no extraordinary events planned at the Vatican.**

The Year of the Eucharist is meant to **help the faithful discover the meaning of the Blessed Sacrament.** John Paul II would be please if **two objectives** are achieved during this Year: **1) a greater valuing of Sunday Mass** and **2) the intensification of Eucharistic adoration.**

The Year of the Eucharist has three goals.

(Note similarity to the Three Goals of Catholic Evangelization – *Go and Make Disciples*)

◇ (Know – Live the Faith) The **first goal** is to **strengthen our prayer life.**

- Allow for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and make a commitment to spend time with the Blessed Sacrament
- Regularly celebrate the Eucharist (daily and with the homebound and sick),

coupled with the sacrament of reconciliation

- Emphasize the importance of attending Sunday Mass
- Celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi (the Body and Blood of Christ) with a Eucharistic procession
- Promote knowledge and prayer of the saints who were outstanding for their love of the Eucharist
- Celebrate the anniversary of the consecration of one's church
- Support the spiritual life of those who, being in irregular situations, but participating in Mass, cannot receive Eucharistic Communion

◇ (Show – Invite Others) The **second goal** is to **upgrade our standard of Christian living**.

- Connect the Eucharist to our daily lives so that in being fed, we are enlightened. Allow ourselves to be transformed into a clearer image of Christ. Intentionally seek to love our neighbor (and enemy)
- Share one's table and Mass with the poor, in the service of charity

◇ (Grow – Transform the world through Jesus Christ) The **third goal** of the Year of the Eucharist is **to transform us more fully into missionaries of the Eucharist for the new evangelization**.

- Spread the good news of the Eucharist to help transform people – *witness!*
- Encourage the spirit of mission, which stems from the Eucharist
- Read *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (1975), Pope Paul VI; *Mission of the Redeemer* (1990), Pope John Paul II; *At the Beginning of the New Millennium* (2001), Pope John Paul II; and *Go and Make Disciples* (1992), US Bishops
- Create sections of Eucharistic interest in newsletters, bulletin inserts, and web pages
- Form parishioners as to the appropriate movements and responses at Mass
- Give attention to liturgical singing (JPII's document on sacred music)
- Enhance or establish liturgical commissions; form liturgical ministers
- Offer age-appropriate faith formation opportunities on the Eucharist in the life of the Church and of the Christian (preparation for first Communion; Eastertide, Lent)
- Rediscover one's "own" parish church, knowing the meaning of what is usually seen in it and extending an "open house" to the larger community as well (the visible in the church favors contemplation on the Invisible)

Renew faith, sacrifice, communion and service in the Eucharist, as a sign for the Catholic Church and the world

El año de la Eucaristía: una invitación a combinar la oración y el compromiso caritativo

El Papa ha dejado la iniciativa de cómo celebrar este **Año de la Eucaristía** a cada iglesia en particular. No habrán **ningunos acontecimientos extraordinarios planeados en el Vaticano**.

El Año de la Eucaristía está dirigido a **ayudar a los fieles a descubrir el significado del Santísimo Sacramento**. Juan Pablo II se sentirá complacido si **dos objetivos** son alcanzados durante este año: **1) una mayor apreciación de la misa del domingo y 2) la intensificación de la adoración Eucarística**.

El Año de la Eucaristía tiene tres metas.

(Note la semejanza con las Tres Metas de la Evangelización Católica – *Vayan y Hagan Discípulos*)

- ◊ (Saber – Vivir la fe) La **primera meta** es **fortalecer nuestra vida de oración**.
 - Permitir la adoración del Santísimo Sacramento y comprometerse a pasar tiempo con el Santísimo Sacramento.
 - Celebrar regularmente la Eucaristía (diariamente y con los enfermos y confinados en sus hogares), unido con el sacramento de la reconciliación.
 - Enfatizar la importancia de atender a la misa dominical.
 - Celebrar la Fiesta del Corpus Christi (el cuerpo y la sangre de Cristo) con una procesión con la Eucaristía.
 - Promover el conocimiento y las oraciones de los santos que se destacaron por su amor a la Eucaristía.
 - Celebrar el aniversario de la consagración de su parroquia.
 - Apoyar la vida espiritual de los que, estando en situaciones irregulares, pero que participan en la misa, no pueden recibir la Eucaristía.
- ◊ (Demostrar – Invitar a otros) La **segunda meta** es **mejorar nuestro estilo de vida cristiana**.
 - Conectar la Eucaristía con nuestro diario vivir, de modo que al ser alimentados, seamos iluminados. Permitamos ser transformados en una imagen más clara de Cristo. Intencionalmente, busquemos amar a nuestro prójimo (y a nuestros enemigos).
 - Compartir nuestra mesa y la Misa con los pobres, por medio del servicio de la caridad.
- ◊ (Crecer – Transformar al mundo a través de Jesucristo) La **tercera meta** del Año de la Eucaristía es **transformarnos más completamente en misioneros de la Eucaristía para la nueva evangelización**.
 - Anunciar las buenas nuevas de la Eucaristía para ayudar a transformar a la gente - *¡ser testigos!*
 - Fomentar el espíritu misionero, el cual proviene de la Eucaristía.
 - Leer *Evangelización del Mundo Contemporáneo* (1975), Papa Pablo VI; *Misión del Redentor* (1990), Papa Juan Pablo II; *El Nuevo Milenio que Comienza* (2001), Papa Juan Pablo II; y *Vayan y Hagan Discípulos* (1992), Obispos de los Estados Unidos.
 - Crear secciones de interés por la Eucaristía en periódicos, boletines, volantes para el boletín y páginas digitales (*web pages*).
 - Instruir a los feligreses en cuanto a los movimientos y las respuestas apropiadas en la Misa.
 - Prestar atención al canto litúrgico (el documento de Juan Pablo II sobre música sacra, diciembre 2003)

- Mejorar o establecer comisiones litúrgicas; instruir a los ministros de la liturgia
- Ofrecer oportunidades de formación de fe apropiadas para cada edad sobre la Eucaristía en la vida de la iglesia y del cristiano (como por ejemplo: preparación para la Primera Comunión, Triduo Pascual, Cuaresma)
- Redescubrir “su” iglesia/parroquia, conociendo el significado de lo que se ve usualmente en ella y también, extendiendo una “casa abierta” (o bienvenida) a la comunidad más grande (lo visible en la iglesia favorece la contemplación de lo invisible)

Renueve la fe, el sacrificio, la comunión y el servicio en la Eucaristía como signo para la iglesia católica y para el mundo.

Year of the Eucharist: Faith Sharing Sessions

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Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, has commissioned a six week small group faith sharing program for parishes to use as part of the Year of the Eucharist. Maureen Gallagher and Jean Marie Heisberger, both of whom are nationally known religious educators and have worked in the field of adult faith formation, prepared these materials. We are extremely grateful to Maureen and Jean Marie for the excellent program they have written which is entitled, *Eucharist: Source and Summit of Life and Mission of the Church*.

The materials include a booklet with six sessions that help participants grow in their love of the Eucharist and understanding of the mission that we are given as Catholics when we are sent out from the Mass. Archbishop Dolan has encouraged parishes in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to use *Eucharist: Source and Summit* during Lent 2005. However, the materials are not Lenten specific and could be used in any six-week period, including the Easter season or fall of 2005 if a parish already has plans for Lent.

We are also very happy to inform you that Liturgical Publications, Inc. has agreed to publish and sell the adult faith sharing booklets as well as an accompanying *Source and Summit Program Planner* containing everything you will need to manage the program.

Attached is a PDF of the order blank for the *Source and Summit* materials. You can also obtain further information about this program at the website: <http://www.yearofeucharist.com>. The website will contain a sample of the small group materials as soon as Archbishop Dolan gives his Imprimatur to them.

These materials could be used in small groups in people's homes, a large group setting in a parish which includes small group discussions, or any other faith sharing setting.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like further information about the *Eucharist: Source and Summit* program. I hope your dioceses and parishes will benefit greatly from using these materials.

4. Resources

RENEW International presents *Why Catholic? Journey through the Catechism*, a concrete approach to help adults deepen their Catholic faith and connect its teachings to their everyday lives.

With its thorough exploration of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Why Catholic?* encourages learning in a prayerful small-community setting via 48 sessions covering Catholic beliefs, sacraments, morality, and prayer.

Why Catholic? offers a flexible experience for the entire parish. In addition to its use in SCCs, it is appropriate for catechist formation, RCIA, sacramental preparation for parents, and strengthening family faith development.

Why Catholic? fosters the goals of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the landmark U.S. Bishops' pastoral plan for adult faith formation. Available in both English—*Why Catholic?* and Spanish—*¿Por qué ser católico?* For more information, contact Sr. Terry Rickard, OP at 908-769-5400, ext. 160 or terryr@renewintl.org

Visit us at our website: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

We hope you enjoyed reading this.
For additions, comments and address changes, to the
NAFSCC E-Newsletter
please email Marci Blum OSF at DBQCFL/AF@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us