



The Escarpment *Newsletter of the Wollongong Cursillo Movement*

Issue 2, 2022

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

“And the one who received the seed in rich soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundred fold, now sixty, now thirty.”

Matthew 13: 23

The Homily following the Gospel on Friday was very reassuring for us. Fr. Victor reflected that we produce a different harvest at different times in our lives. We are not expected to produce 100% all the time. Sometimes our yield may only be 60% or 30%. The expectation is that we just keep trying to understand the word of God and respond as we are prompted.

Dianne

PART 1: PERSONAL FAITH IN THE TIME OF COVID19

Like many of you, COVID19 has significantly affected me in ways you are currently familiar with. We are now entering our third month of lockdown in the Greater Sydney region and I wake up each day wondering how I am going to make it through the day. My daily morning walk and trips to shops to buy food items offer me some semblance of freedom but the reality is that the loss of doing things that are normal in everyday life is very keenly felt. I never thought that the idea of getting a haircut would be so special and I wonder how my hair will be when, finally, I can get one.

Like many people, I turn to my faith for help to get me through these times. I feel comforted from the meaning of faith from Saint Paul as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Herein lies a dilemma for me. In my daily prayers I pray to God with the hope for a better world but I look at those parts of the world where people are suffering and look at significant historical events where people have

suffered and I ask: “Where are you God? Where are you when we need you?” Why don’t you answer my prayers? To me, saying these words seems to be an affront to God – Frank, how dare you say such things? I know that my faith is being tested. It brings pain to me to learn that Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, despite her ministry to the poor, suffered a fifty-year crisis of faith and doubted the existence of God. In a letter she wrote to Reverend Michael Van Der Peet in 1979, she stated, “Jesus has a very special love for you. But as for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear. The tongue moves [in prayer] but does not speak ... I want you to pray for me – that I let Him have [a] free hand.” If such a person as Mother Teresa had these doubts, what hope do I have in having a positive faith?

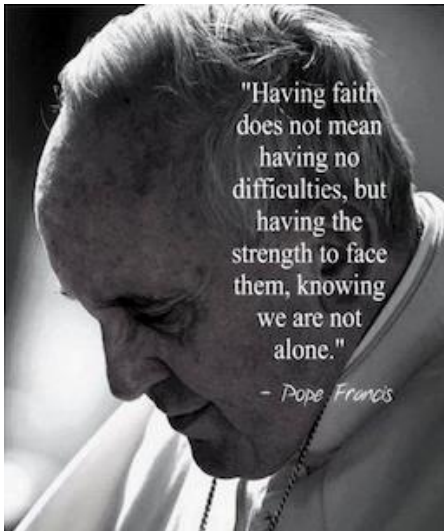
Many people have abandoned their faith because of their belief that God has let them down. I know that this is something that I cannot do, to stop praying and accept that God will not intervene in my life and for mankind. There were days when I felt greater belief in my winning of Lotto than I had in my belief of God acting in my life. Still, I needed some help to deal with my concerns about my faith. I approached my Parish Priest and spoke to him about my faith. He gave me this prayer: “Father I have faith; deepen my faith. Father I have belief; help my unbelief”. It is a prayer I say on a daily basis. What is positive about this prayer is that it deals with the difficulties we have with our faith, our unbeliefs.

An important reminder about faith has come to me from the book “Candles In The Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic” by Rowan Williams. Williams notes that the challenge to faith is to believe not just at times when life is meaningful but also at times when it is not – such as now. It is easy to leave God out when we are weighed down by what is worrying us. At the blessing of the Paschal Candle at Easter, we hear the words “All times belong to Him”. In every moment, even in times of boredom, anxiety, frustration and this pandemic, Jesus is there for us. Daily, while on my morning walk and listening to the radio, I am disheartened by our seeming inability to deal with COVID19 and, in Australia, by the ad hoc policies of State Premiers that seem to inflict more pain on residents; and the chaos in many parts of the world, especially in Afghanistan. Certainly, these events are powerful reminders of my need to have faith in the goodness of God.

A turning point for me has come in the form of a quote I found on the web. It is an inscription written on the wall of a cellar in Cologne where a number of Jews hid themselves for the entire duration of World War II:

*I believe in the sun even when it is not shining;
I believe in love even when feeling it not;
I believe in God even when he is silent.*

The last line was key. The silence experienced by the writer reminded me of the silence I feel, and the silence experienced by Mother Teresa. Yet that was not what struck me most. What struck me was the powerful belief of the writer in God at a time much more dire than today. We all know too well the Holocaust which resulted in the death of over six million Jews at the hands of the Germans. For a Jew, to live a day during the Holocaust was a miracle. I could *feel* the faith of the writer, a sure faith in a time of extreme danger and uncertainty. This feeling was to change my thinking about how I would approach my faith.



To me, the problem with faith resolved itself with the following: ***when faith is weak, pray harder to increase your faith!*** Pope Francis clearly highlighted the importance of our faith when he noted that “Having faith does not mean having no difficulties, but having the strength to face them, knowing that we are not alone”. Hence, the need for prayer to increase my faith. Just as important, Pope Francis’s observation that we are not alone in facing difficulties highlighted the need of letting God be the central part of my faith and my life.

How was I to put God as the centre of my life? Some time ago I wrote **Let Go. Let God. Let Life.** as a reminder of what I should be doing as part of my daily prayer life. I left it alone, a Word file sitting on my computer. I now am realising that it is a vital guide to increasing my faith. It is an important reminder that I am not alone – God is there for me.

Let Go asks us to let go of the belief that we are able to deal with life’s problems all by ourselves. Simply, we cannot, however hard we try. We ignore God if this is our approach.

Let God is asking God to be the centre of our lives and to be our help and guide when difficulties arise. It is strongly based on trust in God. It is asking God to be with us at every moment, well encapsulated in the image below. It involves a lot of prayer to God. It also involves our surrender to God. In our weaknesses and trials, God becomes our strength who pulls us through. On a daily basis, I have become aware that God has lifted my fears and anxieties and “things work out” for the better. Many of our problems arise because we leave God out of the picture and we try to solve life’s problems by ourselves – often unsuccessfully.



Let Life is a request that we enjoy the beauty of creation and not ignore the healing beauty of creation that God has gifted us. As a photographer, I often see and capture the magnificence of a sunrise or a sunset or the beauty of a flower and I know that God wants me to enjoy them. When I see a sunrise, I will say “Good Morning God”. To me, a sunrise is a very powerful reminder of the presence of God. Each and every day of our lives has its worries, as Jesus has told us (Matthew 6: 25-29, 34), but we need time out to see those things that lift us up from life’s difficulties. Again, God, through His creation, provides the answer.



Sunrise taken at William Howe Regional Park at Mount Annan

At the moment, I am feeling the impacts of this COVID19 pandemic and wondering when it will ever end. Yes, I am feeling negative as each day seems to be a copy of the previous day – and I often struggle to find things to do to keep myself active for that day. I have to accept the fact that while faith is the “the assurance of things hoped for”, God works to his own

schedule, not mine, even when I pray to God to deal with an issue that is happening now (and, in my thinking, needs God's assistance now). ***This is perhaps the true test for faith – to accept that God hears our prayers and responds at His own choosing, yet we must have the endurance to never stop calling on him through our prayers.*** As St Peter states, “endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us” (Romans 5:3).

Given this need for endurance, ***we need to see faith as a journey, not simply a destination.*** There are many good reasons why viewing faith as a journey is helpful for us. Journey focuses on the process of getting there, not the arrival. Each day on this journey is an opportunity to examine my faith. Each day is a time to pray and reflect. Each day is a time to grow in my relationship with God. Each day is an opportunity to follow Jesus and not be dictated by my own wishes and desires. Each day offers the chance to be a better person compared to the day before. If I fall down on one day, I know I can rise the next day.

This journey will not be an easy one. There will be days of doubt where we wonder if God is there for us. This period of pandemic highlights this quite well. There will also be days when we feel the presence of God among us. The important thing I need to realise is that God will be my guide, whether the journey is difficult or easy. I am comforted by the promise of Jesus ----- “I tell you solemnly, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24) ----- knowing that, if I call to Him in my daily prayers to him, he will hear me. My journey becomes a journey of ongoing dependence on God.

I am accepting of the fact that I will struggle with my faith but I believe my approach ----- pray harder, Let Go. Let God. Let Life. and seeing my faith as a dynamic journey ----- keeps my mind on God on a daily basis. At this stage, this can only be a good thing.

Frank

An extract from the April Witness given by Trish.

In January I was offered placement in a couple of state colleges as well as a placement at The Good Samaritan Teacher's College. I was offered scholarship which I accepted. I quickly found out that my fellow student at the college all went to catholic high schools so I made the

decision to do as many Religious Education courses as I can to give myself a good grounding and background so I could teach Religion to children in the future. I did extremely well at college and I thoroughly enjoyed the academic life. I was very lucky in choosing this college as over the course we spent a lot of time teaching in the classroom culminating in a terms prac in our final year. Every Friday the college would have Mass for the students in their chapel which I attended. As a student I lived in Marrickville and when I didn't go home to the farm I went to Sunday Mass at St. Bridgets which had Mass every hour in the morning and again from early afternoon in a few different languages. I often attended the 9.00am Mass as it was in English but I did experience an Italian, Spanish and Maltese Masses.

When I was at home we still went to the 9.00 mass at Thirlmere but sometimes we went to the 7.30 mass in Picton.



An extract from the June witness

given by Kathy

A reading from a course I am currently doing took me back to when God was seeking to fill the hole in my heart. That started me on a search. I found Jesus, God and learned later about God's spirit touching my heart. I am continually being drawn in to learning more, not just academically, but in our environment, people I know, creation. The Eucharist sustains me and "feeds" me.

When Jesus told us to "feed" people, he often didn't mean for us to physically give people food. He meant to "feed" them by telling them the Good News about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. Bringing them closer to God. Sustaining them in their faith with life and support.

Cursillo is designed for this. Like-minded people meeting up and sharing faith matters, but also supporting each other to live faithfully their Day 4. My experience is that if we allow ourselves, we can just turn into a social group, talking about everything else but our faith or how God's Spirit is working in our lives. While the social aspect is important, we need to be

vigilant that our love for the other is also demonstrated in the way we learn and support each other.

My Parish has put together a new Pastoral Care Team, and I was asked to lead it. A big learning curve, but one I am very happy to take. The people we visit are among other things, elderly, lonely, sick or unable to leave the home. The ministry is tending to the needs of those who would otherwise be forgotten or left behind and I am so happy to now be involved. We are “feeding” them with our care, love and support and of course the Eucharist.

There are many ways to show love and support. Just as there are many gifts, we bring ours to the table each time we meet. God provides a meaning to our lives and a purpose. I look forward to hearing.

THE SECRETARIAT

What is it?

The Secretariat has the responsibility to guard the identity of the Cursillo movement and to see to its promotion, development and direction on the diocesan level.

It is a committee elected through a formal process by the diocesan Cursillo community as a whole for a set term of office. It is an instrument of service rather than authority. The Secretariat exists in a diocese with the Blessing of the Bishop, who appoints a Spiritual director to provide guidance on matters of Theology and Spirituality.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT

- To have custody of the Cursillo identity and ensure it ties in with the World movement through the National Secretariat. Keeping its direction true to the Cursillo mentality, Purpose and Method.
- To support the School of Leaders and other Community groups.
- To Schedule and conduct the 3 day weekends.
- To ensure teams are made up of Spiritually, prepared members who are active in the fourth day and living witnesses to the Cursillo movement.
- To remain affiliated with the National Secretariat

Secretariat Positions and Roles:

PRESIDENT

- Together with the Secretary prepares the agenda for all of the Secretariat meetings.
- Distributes any information through movement Newsletters.
- Chairs the Secretariat meetings.

VICE PRESIDENT

- Supports the President and acts on his/her behalf when President is absent.

SECRETARY

- Prepares agendas with the President and distributes them.
- Keeps all records.
- Takes and distributes minutes from meetings.
- Keeps the mailing list up to date.
- Assumes responsibility for all correspondence.

TREASURER

- Responsible for the financial matters of the movement, including the payment of accounts.
- Preparation of reports for meetings.

NATIONAL DELEGATE

- Represents the Wollongong secretariat at National meetings.
- Prepares an Annual report for the National Secretariat.
- Reports back information from National.

PALANCA SECRETARY

- Keeps records of 3 day Cursillo weekends and passes on Palanca requests.
- Liaises with the National Palanca secretary.

- Requests Palanca for the Wollongong Diocese.
- Sends written Palanca to other Australian Diocese as requested.

NON EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

ESCARPMENT EDITOR

- Responsible for the production of official publication of the Wollongong Cursillo Movement on a periodical basis.

ULTREYA CO-ORDINATOR

- Plans Ultreyas by Date, Venue and hosting Reunion group for the monthly Ultreyas.
- Books the venue and confirms with hosting group one week before Ultreya.
- Reports to Secretariat.

RESOURCE OFFICER

- Responsible for the storage and maintenance of movement resources.
- Prepares and passes on kits for 3 day weekends.
- Orders publications as required and resources as required.

FUND RAISING OFFICER

- Organises fund raising when needed with the support of Secretariat.
- Organises trading table and raffle each Ultreya.

WOLLONGONG ELECTIONS ARE HELD EVERY TWO YEARS.

POSITION TERMS ARE FOR 2 YEARS

EACH POSITION CAN BE HELD FOR UP TO TWO TERMS

Our Elections were due in August this year but due to the resurgence of Covid our Ultreys are returning to Zoom for the time being. Therefore the Secretariat has decided to postpone the Elections until November. This gives all our Cursillistas time to read about the Secretariat positions and Pray and ponder about what role you can take to support Wollongong Cursillo.

REUNION GROUPS

LOCATION	CONTACT	MEETING
<i>Eagle Vale Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Pauline Ranger	Currently meeting via Zoom
<i>Campbelltown Ladies – Night</i>	Contact Margaret French	1 st Tuesday of the month 5.30pm in Campbelltown
<i>Dapto Men's - Night</i>	Contact Matthew Nicholson	Inactive TBA
<i>Camden Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Dianne Garland	2 nd and 4 th Thursday of month 10am in Camden/Raby
<i>Tahmoor Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Lesley Wyatt	1 st Mon of the Month 1.30pm in Tahmoor / Buxton
<i>Rosemeadow Men – Night</i>	Contact Lester Smith	Every 2 weeks at 6.30pm. Tuesday or Wednesday Rotating houses.
<i>Wollongong Ladies - Day</i>	Contact Elizabeth Gill	4 th Friday of the month 10am
<i>Bossley Park ladies - Night</i>	Contact Denise D'Amore	1 st Wednesday of each Month 7pm. Rotating houses
<i>Panania Ladies Group – Day</i>	Contact Trish Benn	1 st Tuesday of each Month 11.30am at Panania

ULTREYAS

Wollongong Ultreys are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 2pm.

The following Ultreys will be held on the:

20th August – via Zoom – Organising group is Campbelltown ladies

17th September – at Narellan Vale – Organising groups are Panania and Bossley Park

15th October – at Dapto – Organising group is Wollongong/Dapto ladies

19th November – at Tahmoor – Organised by Secretariat (Christmas celebration)

Dianne will let us know if the above Ultreys will go ahead at the appointed venue or will be on Zoom.

Ultreya organiser is Kristine Flood – kristineflood@outlook.com

ADDRESSES FOR THE ABOVE ULTREYA'S

St. Clare's Presbytery – 59 Holdsworth Drive Narellan Vale

St. John's Presbytery – 24 Jerramatta St. Dapto

St Anthony's – 20 Stratford Rd, Tahmoor

WATCH THIS SPACE



There will be a fundraiser this year, a walkathon in October. More details will come out after the next Secretariat meeting to be held in August and in the Presidents Newsletters.

Thank you all for supporting our Ultreya "trading table and raffles". We have been averaging about \$100 each month, this money will go a long way in supporting our next 3 day weekend.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2022

Thank you to all our Cursillistas who have paid their Subscriptions for 2022

The yearly subscription is \$20 per family.

If you wish to contribute you can give Pauline (Our treasurer) the money at an Ultreya, send a cheque or use online transfer.

Payment details for subscriptions:

*Diocese of Wollongong Cursillo Movement, BSB 641 800,
A/c No. 200459499*

Send cheques to:

Pauline Ranger 17 Brierley Place Eagle Vale N.S.W. 2558

The next Escarpment will be out in November 2022.

If you have something you wish me to put in the next Escarpment please send it to me by early November.

Please continue to keep each other in your prayers.

Thank you to all the Cursillistas who contributed to this Escarpment.

Contact details – denisedamore0@gmail.com

Phone: 0438254139

De Colores

Denise and helpers