

PROCLAIM
2016



On a Mission of Mercy: Evangelising Parishes



A PARISH RESOURCE - PART 1

**Keynotes & Reflection
Questions**



Office for
Evangelisation

CATHOLIC
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BROKEN BAY

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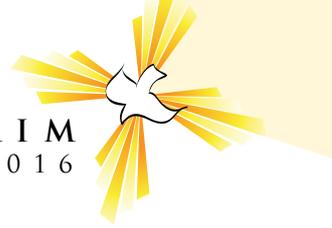
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CELEBRATING PROCLAIM 2016

Over three energising days in September 2016 over 520 delegates came together in Chatswood, NSW, to share insights and exchange best practices on parish evangelisation. The third turn of this national Conference, PROCLAIM 2016 was hosted and organised by the Office for Evangelisation, Diocese of Broken Bay, on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The unique character of the PROCLAIM Conference is its focus on the local parish and its life and mission, serving as a gathering point for those working and serving in the midst of these 1,300 parish communities across the nation.



The conference was formally opened by Bishop Peter A Comensoli, who announced that the gathering had received the apostolic blessing of the Holy Father himself. In his correspondence to Bishop Comensoli, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State at the Holy See, shared:

The Holy Father asks you kindly to convey his cordial greetings to all assembled in the Diocese of Broken Bay for the third National Conference on Evangelisation, Proclaim 2016: Mercy. He trusts that in this Holy Year devoted to the preaching and practice of mercy, the Conference will contribute to a more effective proclamation of the Gospel message of forgiveness, redemption and interior renewal . . . With these sentiments, His Holiness commends the Conference to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

Following morning prayer His Eminence Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, shared his learnings from Pope Francis with Conference delegates, confirming that the 'new evangeliser' in the parish requires four qualities to lead renewal: courage, confidence, a sense of urgency, and joy. The Cardinal encouraged our boldness as evangelisers, a boldness that emerges from our own dedication to personal prayer in the Spirit, our confidence in the glorious truth that we have received, and the desire or passion to be an evangelising disciple in the midst of an often challenging culture.

In her own keynote address Dr Susan Timoney, also of the Archdiocese of Washington, underlined that our parish boundaries do not determine where a person goes to church but rather who the parish is called to serve. Dr Timoney emphasised that the local parish serves everyone, Catholic and otherwise, who lives and works within its boundaries and that our parishes are called to be flexible and creative in engaging this local community with the Gospel. This is the meaning of an embedded and missionary parish.

I was privileged to address participants on the cultural tensions and challenges of change within the life of Australian parishes, the need for vision, bold proclamation, personal witness and a constant orientation outwards to the world, while the final keynote of the conference was delivered by Bishop Nicholas Hudson of Westminster, UK, who spoke beautifully of the potential of parishes to express Christ's mercy. In a moving reflection, Bishop Hudson recalled St John XXIII's description of the parish as "a village fountain to which all have recourse in their thirst", a metaphor extended by Pope Francis in his own image of the parish as an "oasis of mercy". The inclusive and transformative potential of our parishes, when they express the tenderness of God's love, was affirmed also by the concluding panel discussion of the Conference, facilitated by Vicar General of Diocese of Broken Bay, Very Rev Dr David Ranson.

Conference participants also enjoyed daily liturgies hosted by Fr Paul Finucane and Chatswood Parish, and facilitated by Fr Robert Borg, a 'Praisefest' event on the second night of the Conference led by Catholic Youth Broken Bay with over 350 participants both young and 'young at heart', and numerous workshops across the three days, canvassing a range of topics that sought to speak to the lived situation and evangelical mission of parishes today. The response from Conference delegates has been overwhelming and we trust that participants from across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific have returned home inspired to renew the face of their parishes and communities.



To support the ongoing mission of our parishes, the Office for Evangelisation has assembled the four Conference keynotes from PROCLAIM 2016 and supplemented these with reflection questions to support local discussion and implementation of the insights of the Conference. Select workshops have also been chosen to provide additional resources for your community's reflection, covering themes such as parish engagement, the best practices in parish evangelisation drawn from Australian research, and the formation of evangelisation teams. We hope this resource enriches your parish life in its mission.

With every blessing in Christ,

Daniel Ang
Director, Office for Evangelisation
Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay



HOW TO USE THIS PARISH RESOURCE

For those able to attend PROCLAIM 2016, the three days of the Conference offered fresh insights and practical strategies to the task of developing an increasingly missionary focus for our parishes. This parish resources aims to make these insights and strategies more widely available and to assist parishes in their discernment and implementation of those learnings.

Part 1 of this resource contains:

- Text of all four keynote addresses, with accompanying guided questions
- Material from the 'Praisefest' youth event, with a sample run sheet

Part 2 of this resource contains:

- Five workshop presentations with accompanying handouts

Whilst this resource can be used for personal reflection, it is best used within a parish setting by a parish group, for example, a Parish Pastoral Council. The guided questions are offered to facilitate the process of parish discernment, and it is hoped that by engagement with this resource, parishes will be able to consider fresh ways to develop a growing missionary outlook and to become ever more effective in the mission of evangelisation.

Note that PROCLAIM 2016 keynotes and many of the workshop presentations were recorded and can be accessed at www.xt3.com/proclaim2016 (video of keynotes) and www.xt3.com/proclaim (audio).

PROCLAIM
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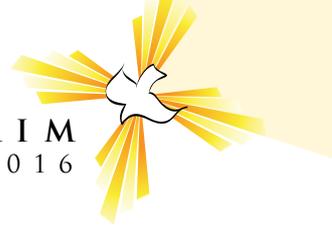


**THE MISSIONARY MANDATE OF THE PARISH:
CHRISTIAN LIFE EMBEDDED IN OUR
NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Keynote Address by Dr Susan Timoney
Secretary for the Secretariat of Pastoral Ministry and
Social Concerns, Archdiocese of Washington



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Parish as a Spiritual Home

The first insight we have as to how the parish community as we know it today took shape is in the Acts of the Apostles, in which we find a description of the structure of the life of the first Christian community. In Acts 2:41-47, we read that they gathered for worship, to share fellowship to share with those in need, and to learn from the teaching of the Apostles.

The substance of parish life has not changed because the mission of the parish has not changed. The parish is the local Church in the homes of her sons and daughters. The primary mission of the parish then is to be the spiritual home of those who have been baptised and have become members of the family of God. When people have an experience of the parish as a spiritual home, it really does take on the life of a family.

In my more than 25 years of experience working in parish ministry, I would say that most people love their parish. I have the privilege of assisting the parishes of the Archdiocese of Washington with pastoral planning and evangelisation initiatives. I have never been to a parish where I have not heard people say 'I love this parish'. Sometimes, even when I am there because there is some sort of pastoral crisis, people will want to assure me that this is a great parish.

People love their parishes because they are their spiritual home. When we have found a parish home, it becomes part of our life – fellow parishioners become like family members, parish celebrations are as important as some of our family celebrations. My father, with the exception of military service, never lived more than six kilometers from the parish in which he was baptised, made his first communion and confirmation. It was the parish in which all but one of his children were baptised and from where his parents were buried. When the parish was being merged with another parish and the only activity that would take place in the church, was one Mass on a Sunday, I asked my father how he felt about that. He said, "I am fine with it as long as I can be buried from it!" In my father's eighty-two years, so much of his faith was lived out in that parish community and that in turn shaped his relationship with God.

I have lived and travelled to four continents and I have always felt at home in the parish where I have gone to Mass. While a student in Rome and a member of San Agostino parish, I can still vividly remember how proud I was the day I could pray the rosary in rapid-fire Italian with the senior ladies of my parish!

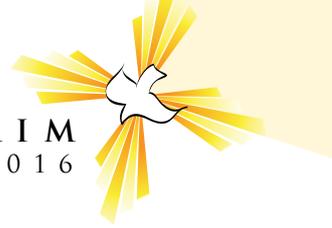
This feeling of a parish community being a family is deeply rooted in the theological concept of the Church as the People of God. We are family, sons and daughters of the one God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, deeply connected through the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we become the body of Christ! St John Paul II said it so well in his exhortation of the mission and role of the laity, "the parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building, but rather 'the family of God,' a 'fellowship, afire with a unifying spirit'".

The unifying spirit that defines the experience of communion is also captured in the Greek word that is the origin of the word 'parish'. Paroika means "those living near or beside." The communion is found in a literal sense in the parish being located in a particular community but also there is a second meaning that captures the reality of the parish as the temporary home of a pilgrim people. In Greek, there is also an understanding of members of a parish being "resident aliens," in the sense of pilgrims, who are on a journey toward their real home which is heaven.

Embedded in the Life of a Community

Just as homes are the heart of family life, families are also a school that prepares it is children to go out into the world, to grow into citizens of the community. In the same way, the parish prepares its family members to "go forth" as Pope Francis likes to say, to invite people to an experience of the Risen Christ. Parishes are embedded in a particular community to serve not just its members but its neighbors as well. St John Paul II





described this mission as “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters” (Pope John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*).

Embedded is a word that became popularised in the media for the way it which it covered the wars of the last 20 years or so. Journalists and photographers were embedded with soldiers—living in the same quarters and moving with them around the battlefields. “Embedded” helped the listener to grasp in a vivid way the actual life of soldiers in battle. In relationship to the mission of the parish, the word embedded helps us see the importance of asking the question “*What do our parishes need to be doing if they truly are embedded in the lives of our neighborhoods?*”

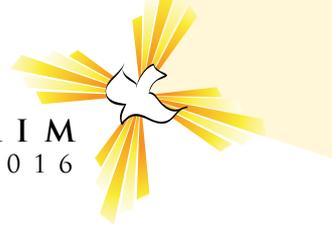
A Place of Encounter

Parishes are the place where one finds Jesus. Joseph Fox, OP writes “*The parish is a stable point of reference of the Church’s daily life for believers at the level of the neighborhood*” (“The Status of the Parish in the 1083 Code of Canon Law in What is a Parish? Baima, Thomas, Hillenbrand Books, 2011). The parish is the place that forms us in the Christian life and prepares us to be that sign of Christ in our neighborhoods. We, in the way in which we live our lives, should be pointing people to the life that can be found in the parish.

Beginning with Pope John XXIII, when he opened the Second Vatican Council, and continuing on to the papacy of Pope Francis, the Church has spoken of the missionary mandate of the parish light of the vision of the New Evangelisation. The emphasis on the experience of encounter which is at the heart of the New Evangelisation calls for our parishes and their parishioners to be in the neighborhood inviting, welcoming, offering an encounter with the living Christ—most obviously through our worship, education and service just as in the time of the very first Christian community. Today, given the number of people who live in our neighborhoods who are unchurched, or who have forgotten what it means to be part of a parish community, our parishes have an opportunity to share in the civic life of the community as door to something more spiritual and profound. People may first come to our parishes though participation in an AA meeting that uses the parish meeting hall for any number of kinds of community meetings and gatherings. We know that today, for many people the only time they are in a church is for a wedding or funeral and so these moments too become an opportunity to invite or suggest what people might be missing for not being part of the church family. What does our parish offer by way of invitation to those guests who pass through our doors?

What I am trying to say is that parish serves the whole of our neighborhoods. Its focus is to ever expand the circle of family. We have a saying in the U.S. that the parish boundaries don’t determine where a person goes to church but rather, who the parish is called to serve. The parish serves everyone, Catholic and otherwise who lives and works within the boundaries. This is what an embedded parish looks like. With the presence of Jesus, the parish is a spiritual center but it is also called to be always invitational.

One of my favourite images for the mission of the parish is found in the words of St John XXIII. He speaks of the parish as the village fountain. In our day, village fountains are more decorative and a reminder of times past. I came to appreciate their importance while I was a student doing my doctoral studies in Rome and living in Piazza Navona, home to one of the world’s great fountains. Rome is not just home to great fountains. If you have ever been to Rome you know that around almost every corner in the city you find a fountain. And those fountains were very important to the life of the community. Before the days of running water people would go each day to get water for drinking, cooking and cleaning from the fountain and to share the news of the day with neighbors. Even today, they remain a place to pause in a daily *passaggiata* to greet neighbors and to gather to share the news of the neighborhood or to watch the world pass by. St John XXIII said a parish can be the “village fountain to which all would have recourse to their thirst.” I think this resonates today because of the spiritual notion of thirst. We thirst for God. For all of us here we know that Jesus quenches that thirst and we desire to drink from the fountain of the Christian spiritual life.



The Parish That Goes Forth

We also know that we live in a world that thirsts. In an interview last winter, in the American journal *Crux*, Archbishop Anthony Fisher, OP spoke of the increasing secularisation of Australian society. He said, “We face some very big questions going forward - whether we’re going to keep secularising and pushing God to the margins in our communities and individual lives, or are we actually going to rediscover the importance of God for both our individual lives and our communities?” He went on to say --and here-- we see the attitude of an evangeliser, “I’m excited by the opportunity to present the Gospel to people who are hungry for it. It’s not that they’ve had bad experiences of the Church or that they’ve rejected the Gospel. Many have just never been presented with it. It’s often received very warmly and openly by such people - they’re not coming with issues of anger toward the Church or the left/right polarisation that some people within the Church suffer from, or preconceptions that almost vaccinate them to the Church.”

His point about encountering people who have varying degrees of relationship with the Church speaks to one of the great insights of a new approach to evangelisation. Within the work of the new evangelisation we are learning that we need to speak in a number of different languages. There is a language for people who have never had a church home, who don’t have a relationship with God. And another kind of language for those who indeed were once active in our church family but who have drifted away, or were hurt, but know some of the language of Catholic life. This invitation uses the language of reconciliation or re-discovery or “come home.” For these reasons we want to be vigilant that our parishes have a place in the life of the community and to make sure we know what that place is and can be, from God’s perspective! What is the Gospel asking of your parish for the life of your neighborhood? And to what is it calling people?

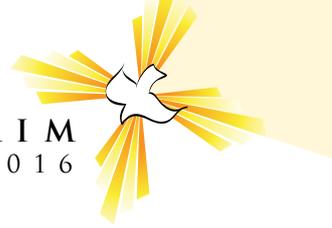
Moving from Maintenance to Mission

In the language of pastoral ministry today, this embracing of a new evangelisation is often described as moving our parishes from a maintenance mode to a mission mode. This means that in one way we can be proud of the work that our parishes do, planning meaningful and beautiful liturgies, educating youth and adults, practicing charitable works, responding to crisis within our community. When people call to ask how to become Catholic, we have a program. And it does genuinely take a lot of work to keep all these good things running. But in another way, we need to ask ourselves honestly, “are we better at keeping them running for the people who come to us than we are at welcoming the stranger or going out and invite people to ‘come and see’”.

This was Jesus’ invitation, “come and see.” In Scripture, Jesus did not find a place to open a school of discipleship and wait for people to come; he was always on the move. He was in the town square, in people’s homes, along the shore, where fishermen were working, and at prayer in the temple. Beginning with the invitation to the first disciples, every encounter with Jesus ended in an invitation to know God.

This missionary mandate has been captured by the Church in the liturgy, as every celebration of the Eucharist ends with the mandate to “Go Forth or “Go and Announce the Good News.” This is our mandate to embed the Risen Christ into the life of our communities. To be the eyes, hands, feet, mouth of Jesus at home, on the job and in the workplace.

On a Monday at work or the day after an important event at the parish you find yourself talking to friends or co-workers about what you have been doing. Do you talk about the things you do at the parish? Do you share something of the event or the liturgy that can be a door to a conversation about faith? I had an encounter with a neighbour; he was walking his dog as I was doing some gardening. He stopped and said, “I hear you work for the Catholic Church” and I said “I do.” And I was thinking “Oh, here it comes.” And he said, “Do you believe in it?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Really, you believe all of it?” Well, it is kind of hard to know exactly what he meant by “all of it” – that’s kind of loaded. So I said, “Yes. I think the Church has the best answers to the most important questions.” That is a line I found in the book *How Do You Spell God* because it is a great answer.



Missionary Consciousness: Evangelised to Evangeliser

Catholics who see themselves as missionary realise that the Mass sends us out. We GO OUT to be the face of Christ and to encounter the face of Christ in the other. Pope Francis says it best in *Evangelii Gaudium* and linking it to what it means to “go out.” “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelising community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others” (EG 24).

In the U.S., I call we Catholics, the ‘Secret Service of Missionary Disciples’ – we are present but don’t talk. We are present but don’t want to be seen! We are called disciples because we are co-responsible for the mission of the Church, we are the evangelisers in our neighborhoods in places where priests are not typically present in the course of the day – at the breakfast table, at break for tea at the office, at the neighborhood barbeque. As a Church, we are bishops, priests, consecrated men and women and laity, co-responsible for the mission. *Heralds of Hope* is one way that Pope Benedict XVI described Christians. It seems a worthy mission for our day. We know people who are desperate to hope in something real and lasting. When he came to visit Washington, we had banners all around the university neighbourhood that said “People with Hope Live Differently.” We believed that captured the Gospel message that Pope Benedict wanted to share with the U.S.

Pope Francis highlights the personal dimension our missionary nature: “The new evangelisation calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not



need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”. If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him “because of the woman’s testimony” (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter

with Jesus Christ, “immediately proclaimed Jesus” (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for?” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 120).

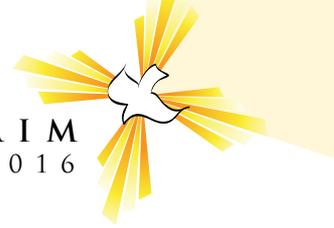
Assessment of Quality of Welcome: Encounter

Evangelisation begins with welcoming. How well does your parish welcome? Who are the people who shop with you in the grocery store closest to the parish? Do the people in the grocery store look like the people in the pew?

If we are missionary disciples, if our parishes are embedded in life of neighbourhood, our neighbours should be in our pews. If one group does not look like the other, we need to ask ‘why not’?

- Ministry not meeting people’s needs?
- People don’t know parish is there?
- Our neighbourhood is changing and our parish is not . . .

Now, think about coming to your parish for the first time and walking through the front door, just like guests do! If I came to your parish on Sunday, brand new, what would I see? As a newcomer, would I see a sign of welcome? Would I meet people who are welcoming seemingly on the look-out, for visitors? Would I see



helpful information for a newcomer?

I was visiting a parish in our Archdiocese near the time for registration for Religious Education classes. One church had a poster that said “Deadline is near, you must do the following or your child will not have a place in class.” At the other parish, I saw a sign that said “Welcome! We are looking forward to learning with your child.”

Taking a step back even further, before people come to the parish, where do they learn about the parish in the neighbourhood, beyond the parking lot of the parish? Is there some presence or announcement of the parish where people gather in the community? Do you find flyers at coffee shop, announcements about parish events on the neighbourhood list serve group? Does your parish take a table or booth at a community fair or festival?

These questions help us think about the caliber of our missionary consciousness and outreach. In Washington, we have developed a tool to help parishes look at this move from maintenance to mission in their own context, where the vitality present in the parish, making it strong is and where is it time to renew a particular aspect of parish life so as to be more missionary.

Assessing a Parish’s Evangelising Capacity: Indicators of Vitality

The Indicators of Vitality is an assessment that asks twelve simple questions that parishioners can ask that point to the vitality of the core areas of parish life. We have found it helpful to show two important things. Evangelisation is not the work of a single committee, or just the pastor and pastoral staff, it is the mission of every ministry; every ministry should be an encounter with the Lord or it is not ministry. I was asked to give a presentation at a parish that has a really vibrant social ministry program but they wanted to reflect on what they offer that the Red Cross does not. Lots of agencies do good social service work but the Church does it with the face of Christ – that needs to be experienced by those we serve.

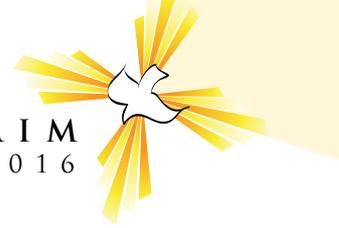
While the complete assessment can be found at <http://adw.org/iov> I share here a sample question from each of the five areas of parish life as an example of the simplicity and missionary orientation of the assessment:

- Worship: Do the times of the weekend liturgy best meet typical schedules of the people who live within the parish boundaries?
- Education: Is there something for all ages; variety of experiences; at times for which can take advantage?
- Service: Is the parish meeting the needs of those most vulnerable in our community?
- Community: What regular events build a sense of fellowship and communion?
- Stewardship/Administration: Does the parish have the best match of resources to ministries?

In parishes who have completed the assessment some examples of changes that they made are adding a Sunday evening Mass as that time better met the needs of its parishioners. In another parish a men’s ministry was planned for 5:30am on Saturday morning as that was a time for many men that was free of family or work responsibilities. In a wealthy suburban parish, when exploring who were the most vulnerable in the community, they found a need to start an outreach to families caught in the cycle of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Moving a parish from maintenance to mission is not a short-term goal or a focus from today to PROCLAIM 2018. Theologians say about the Second Vatican Council that it takes 100 years for the seeds planted at a Council to take bear fruit. So, the vision of the Second Vatican Council is at middle-age! To paraphrase Pope Paul VI, he said that that the objective of the Second Vatican Council could be summed up in one



statement: *to make the Church of the 20th Century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the 20th Century.* And I say; now it is our turn to step up and claim our co-responsibility in making the Church of the 21st Century better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the 21st Century. I believe our parishes who live closest to the people are the place that this will happen. Pope Francis says this “The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 28).

References:

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Pope Benedict XI, “Address to the Convention of the Diocese of Rome” (May 2009)

Timothy Byerley, *The Great Commission* (Paulist Press, 2008)

James A. Coriden, *The Parish in Catholic Tradition, History, Theology and Canon Law* (Paulist Press, 1997)

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*

St John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*,

Donald Wuerl, *New Evangelisation* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2013)



Reflection Questions

1. “The primary mission of the parish ... is to be the spiritual home of those who have been baptised and have become members of the family of God.” What does a spiritual home look like in practice? Does your parish feel like a welcoming family? What might deeper belonging look and feel like?

2. Dr Timoney offers two variant meanings for *paroika*, the Greek origin of the word ‘parish’. How are both of these meanings applicable to our understanding of parish today?

3. How would you respond to Dr Timoney’s question: “What do our parishes need to be doing if they truly are embedded in the lives of our neighbourhood?”

4. Dr Timoney states: “The parish serves everyone, Catholic and otherwise, who lives and works within the boundaries; this is what an embedded parish looks like.” What might your parish do to engage and invite the wider community into its life and service? What opportunities do you see for wider engagement?

5. “Parishes are the place where one finds Jesus.” Do you regard Jesus as at the centre of your parish? How is this reflected in your parish life, programs and activities?

6. Dr Timoney relates an image of the parish as a fountain. What does this mean and does this image describe your parish’s relationship to the wider world? Why or why not?

7. Dr Timoney asserts that our missionary mandate is to “embed the Risen Christ into the life of our communities ... to be the eyes, hands, feet, and mouth of Jesus at home, on the job, and in the workplace.” How might your parish take up this challenge?

8. Dr Timoney coins the phrase ‘the Secret Service of Missionary Disciples’ to describe how many Catholics shy away from proclaiming their faith. Do you think this describes members of your own parish community? What do you consider to be the remedy for a reluctance to embrace a greater missionary orientation?

9. “Evangelisation begins with welcoming. How well does your parish welcome?” What practical strategies does your parish have in place or could put in place to grow a sense of welcome to newcomers as well as existing parishioners?

10. Dr Timoney closes by referencing an “Indicators of Vitality” assessment tool used by the Archdiocese of Washington. See <http://adw.org/iov> for the full instrument. How might your parish engage such a tool?
