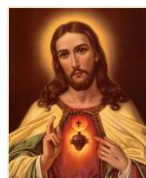


# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference





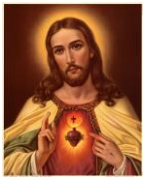
# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## Contents

1	Executive Summary .....	3
2	Introduction .....	5
3	Keynote topics .....	5
3.1	Make Church Matter .....	5
3.2	What's Working in other Churches .....	6
3.3	Moving Members from Consumers to Contributors.....	8
4	Take home messages for Sacred Heart .....	9
5	Ideas on ways forward .....	9
5.1	Parish Pastoral Plan .....	9
5.2	Prioritise the Sunday Mass experience .....	10
5.3	Reaching out to those in our neighbourhood .....	11
6	Appendices – Individual Workshop summaries .....	12
6.1	Jason .....	12
6.1.1	Authentic Welcoming Communities: How do we "take on the smell of the sheep"? .....	12
6.1.2	RCIA: Ideas for welcoming new Catholics AND ensuring they Stay .....	14
6.1.3	My Family, My Faith .....	15
6.1.4	Jenny Collins-White, Catholic Mission.....	15
6.1.5	Group Sessions .....	15
6.1.6	Conclusions.....	16
6.2	Nathan .....	16
6.2.1	Growing our Parishes: Vision & Practice for Making Disciples (Daniel Ang) .....	16
6.2.2	Role of the Worship Leader in the Liturgy (Paul Mason) .....	16
6.2.3	Liturgical Music for Weddings and Funerals (Dr Paul Taylor) .....	17
6.2.4	New Developments in Sound and Vision (Marc Allen).....	17
6.2.5	Concert Thursday night .....	17
6.2.6	Masses .....	17
6.3	Paul .....	18
6.3.1	Parish based Marriage preparation – an evangelisation opportunity .....	18
6.3.2	How to Explain Your Faith without Raising Your Voice .....	18
6.3.3	Lessons on Leadership from Pope Francis.....	19
6.3.4	Teams Equipes Notre Dame .....	19
6.3.5	Interesting display booth discoveries.....	19
6.4	Winton .....	20
6.4.1	"Give me a Drink": Lectio Divina.....	20
6.4.2	Making the Message Matter .....	21
6.5	IMPLEMENTING PROCLAIM_Toowoomba Diocese_delegates workshop summary .....	22



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 1 Executive Summary

With its theme being 'Living the Joy of the Gospel in Parishes', PROCLAIM 2014 was about helping Catholics respond to the call to the new evangelisation, helping to build our parishes as faith communities full of disciples and missionary in outlook.

"The inspiration for this conference comes from two significant sources: Pope Francis' first exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Rebuilt*, the account of a parish which was transformed into an evangelising community in a strategic way."

In Sacred Heart and elsewhere, despite a lot of effort, the population is not becoming more aware of the Joy of the Gospel. There is a declining percentage of the community using The Church to learn, live and share the Joy of the Gospel. However, we are not alone. Across Australia and the world there are other parishes and other churches dealing with the same issues. Many of them have had some success in sharing the age old faith in the modern world. From these communities there is a lot we can learn about how we might enhance Sacred Heart Parish to enrich our faith and to share our faith with our neighbourhood.

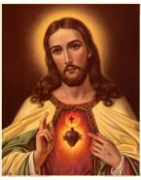


Some key messages for consideration:

- The Church lives in the Parish
- The Parish is a neighbourhood – not the building complex on the corner of North and Tor St.
- Focus on the unchurched people when critiquing current practices
- Prioritise the Sunday Mass experience with consideration of:
  - Music
  - Message
  - Ministry
- Members of the Parish are called to grow into disciples and evangelisers – move from consumers to contributors.
- The Sacraments are often contact points between the Parish and lapsed Catholics or the unchurched – these can be great evangelisation opportunities.
- Ministry is about supporting growth in the Faith community
- Mission is about expanding the Faith community
- Discipleship is about Ministry and Mission
- A Parish Pastoral Plan is a useful framework for collective, fruitful action:
  - Templates and examples available from Parramatta Diocese
  - Usually framed around: Vision; Mission and Strategies
- Any new or ongoing initiative should be based on prayer to discern the Will of God

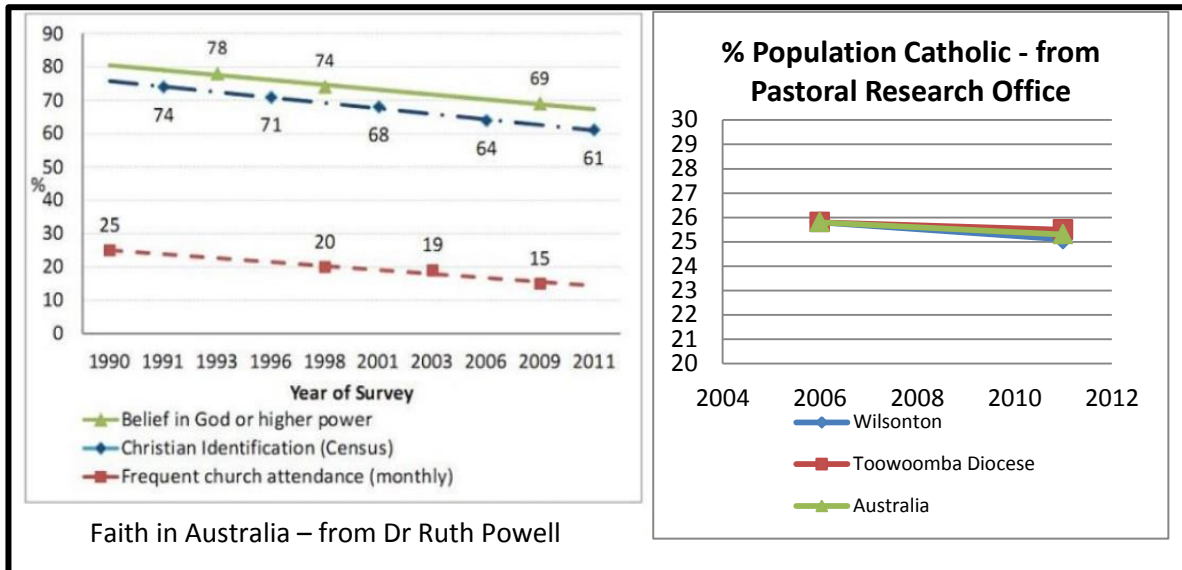
Delegates from Sacred Heart were inspired and enthused by the Proclaim 2014 Conference. At the same time there was a sense of an overwhelming number of initiatives that could be considered to maintain and enhance the Church as it lives in Sacred Heart. In summarising and considering areas for consideration going forward, some of the following imperatives were considered:

- Prayer is the primary key - focus on Jesus
- Have a pastoral vision for the parish
- Have an honest discussion on where your parish is at
- Dare to dream, but, start where you can
- Make a start and look for opportunities
- Consider the people in the pews and the people not in the pews



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



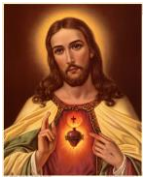
Considering these imperatives, delegates collated a number of ideas for consideration by parishioners to maintain and enhance the Church function in our neighbourhood. These ideas were grouped under the headings of:

- Articulation of a shared pastoral vision for our parish
- Prioritising the Sunday Mass experience, and,
- Reaching out to those in our neighbourhood.



Delegates Winton Thorley, Jason Obst, Nathan Webb and Paul Webb, “thank Sacred Heart Parish for the opportunity to represent them at the Proclaim 2014 Conference. We hope and pray we can share the fruits with others in our Parish neighbourhood so that together we can

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)**



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 2 Introduction

PROCLAIM 2014 was a conference on the New Evangelisation organised on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference by the National Office for Evangelisation. The PROCLAIM 2014 conference was held from 21-23 August 2014 at The Concourse in Chatswood, a business district just north of Sydney - See more at: <http://www.proclaimconference.com.au> . Sacred Heart Parish supported 4 delegates in their attendance at the Conference, these being: Winton Thorley, Jason Obst, Nathan Webb and Paul Webb.

With its theme being 'Living the Joy of the Gospel in Parishes', PROCLAIM 2014 was about helping Catholics respond to the call to the new evangelisation, helping to build our parishes as faith communities full of disciples and missionary in outlook.

"The inspiration for this conference comes from two significant sources: Pope Francis' first exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Rebuilt*, the account of a parish which was transformed into an evangelising community in a strategic way." (Welcome from Mrs Marita Winters, Director, National Office for Evangelisation and Catholic Enquiry Centre).

"As Christians, we deal in hope – a hope born of Jesus our Saviour conquering sin and death by his own death and resurrection...[need to] put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith (Acts 14:22) [and] Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope you all have" (1 Pet 3:15)

"The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishes are the place where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life." (eluded to by Fr Michael White and sourced from US Conference of Catholic Bishops at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/parish-life/> )

Our responsibility as Christians is to go and make disciples. As parishioners of Sacred Heart that responsibility is first and foremost attached to the "neighbourhood" within the parish boundary. The Proclaim conference explored this imperative. The conference also made available to participants workshops that provided ideas and tools to empower parishes to make disciples.

Presentations and workshops included mechanisms to develop faith for members of the Church. However, a greater focus was on the need for that faith to lead to action ensuring the faith and hope we proclaim is available to all. This requires a living faith community that is deliberately welcoming and appealing to those on the fringe and outside the active Church circles.

This can be achieved by ongoing enhancements to parish operations to nurture faith within (ministry) and to share the faith without (mission).

## 3 Keynote topics

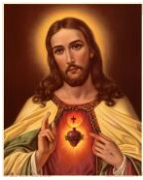
Keynote addresses were recorded and can be viewed online at <http://www.proclaimconference.com.au/resources> Dr Ruth Powell's slides are also available for viewing. The following are some of the messages that Sacred Heart delegates took from the workshops.

### 3.1 Make Church Matter

Prior to the call of Pope Francis to share the "Joy of the Gospel", the Church of the Nativity embarked on a process "to grow disciples, develop a healthier parish community, and more intentionally and effectively serve the New Evangelisation."

Fr Michael White and Tom Corcoran shared some of their experiences and insights from their journey with the Church of the Nativity Parish in Baltimore, US.





# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



This presentation included the Church of the Nativity's story and offered areas for consideration by other parishes looking to rebuild from within and then reach out in the "neighbourhood" that is their Parish.

Ideas were presented on areas that are critical to affirm, enrich and challenge those in the Pews. Only then can a parish take the product that is the Gospel Message and offer it to the wider neighbourhood – by lived example and personal invitations.

From the Proclaim blog site summary Written by [Anna Fsadni](http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/blog/proclaim-2014-seeds-for-parish-transformation.html) and available at <http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/blog/proclaim-2014-seeds-for-parish-transformation.html> :

"Three main lessons that have been pivotal for parish transformation:

1. Focus on the person not coming to church. Why are they not coming?
2. Prioritise the weekend [Mass] experience.
3. Move the Church people to action.

[The old saying, "Open the doors and they'll come" – doesn't work anymore at all.

If someone has a bad Sunday Eucharist experience, they will assume

- That the rest of what you have to offer is equally bad
- That there is nothing there for them
- And this will lead to thinking , or confirm their thinking, that God is irrelevant in their lives]

Displaying the value of the Eucharist and enriching the liturgy depend on three pillars:

1. Music
2. Message
3. Ministers"

Fr Michael and Tom often reiterated the need for any building up to be rooted in prayer and a trust in God's providence.

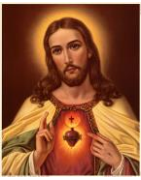
"Whatever kind of parish you're in, whatever style of Church you're leading, whatever the culture of your community, you can grow an healthy parish" (Rebuilt preface, pxvii).

## 3.2 What's Working in other Churches

Dr Ruth Powell shared some of the statistics regarding Church community demographics and explored trends in evangelisation in Christian Communities across Australia. Conference participants were invited to consider how to take these big picture ideas and apply them in their own parish.

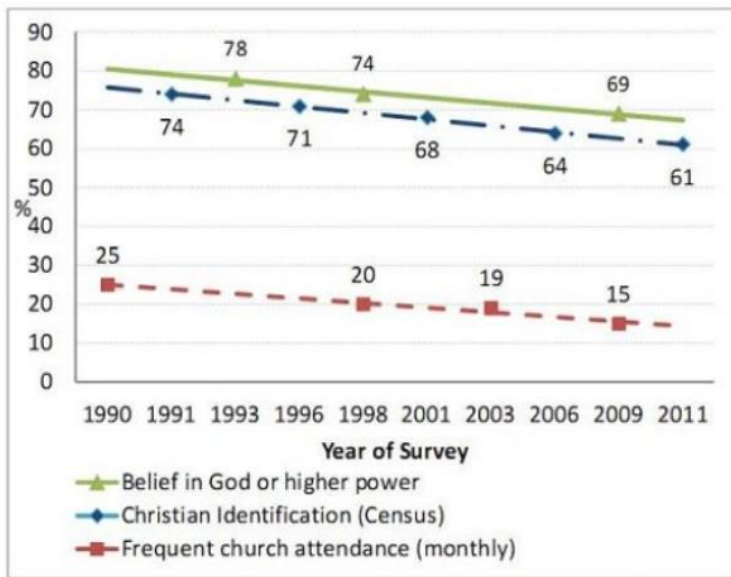
Dr Ruth looked at some elements of churches within Australia that were growing. It was effectively demonstrated that within Australia, churches that are growing are those that use similar principles to those outlined by Fr Michael and Tom to:

1. Focus on the person not coming to church.
2. Prioritise the weekend [Mass] experience.
3. Move the Church people to action.



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



Source: Various social surveys of the Australian population<sup>2</sup>.

## Trends in Australian beliefs - Dr Ruth Powell Slide 5

Notes from accessing Parish and Diocesan documents and comparing them with Dr Ruth Powell's presentation of trends in Australian beliefs.

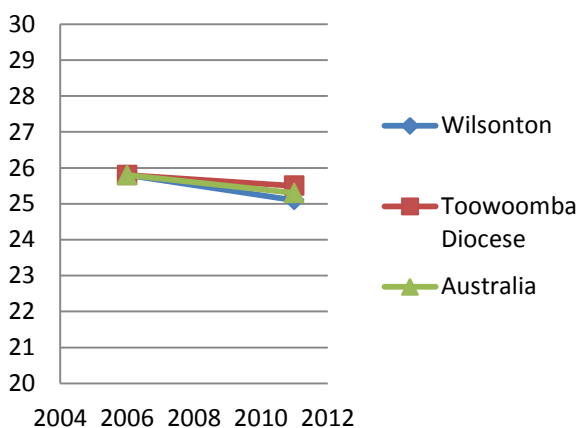
Trends in beliefs and church attendance in Australia is also reflected in the Catholic Church at Sacred Heart and across the Toowoomba Diocese. Dr Ruth's presentation is a call to action for all Christians. The data from the Pastoral Research Council reiterates that this call to action applies to Catholics in Sacred Heart and across the Toowoomba Diocese.

Dr Ruth then joined a number of non-Catholics in a panel discussion. The panel members from several denominations indicated similar trends to those identified by Dr Ruth in their own churches.

Five trends were identified:

1. A decline in religiosity in Australia.
2. There has been an increase in readiness to share Faith.
3. Effective churches are reorienting themselves to 'newcomers'.
4. There has been an increase in 'acts of service'.
5. There has been a decline in people inviting others to church [despite readiness to share faith].

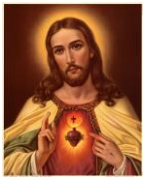
## Percent of population that is Catholic



## Median Age of Catholics



Catholics as a percent of total population and median age (Australian Census data compiled for social profiles by Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research)



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 3.3 Moving Members from Consumers to Contributors

The Church is a movement, which means moving members to take greater responsibility for their personal faith as well as the mission of the Church to make disciples. Fr Michael White and Tom Corcoran again shared their experiences and suggested ways forward for others.

From the Proclaim blog site summary Written by [Anna Fsadni](http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/blog/proclaim-2014-seeds-for-parish-transformation.html) and available at <http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/blog/proclaim-2014-seeds-for-parish-transformation.html>:

“Questions for a parish to consider:

1. As a parish are we making a measurable difference in our community or simply serving our members?
2. Are we mobilised for mission or insisting on business as usual?
3. Are we here to preserve our broken systems or are we willing to go where God is blessing?
4. Are we simply meeting or are we moving?

Four types of relationships people have with Church

1. People committed to not coming
2. Consumers – it’s about them and don’t move
3. Contributors
4. Committed Members, sold out

As a parish what are you already communicating to your parish to get them to move? How do you want people to move? How do you want people to move spiritually? 5 messages and ways Church of the Nativity are trying to implement so parishioners grow in faith:

1. People praying
2. People into small groups
3. People to serve and mission outside the community
4. People to give financially
5. People to invest and invite

How do we help people move from consumers to contributors?

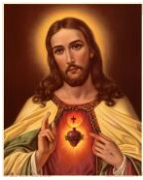
1. Pray
2. Move ourselves
3. Ask them to move
4. Make movement accessible – “Put rungs in the ladder”
5. Set people up for success
6. Celebrate movement
7. Persevere”

A Final Note

- Don’t expect perfection – just what is ‘do-able’.
- Carefully discern what is the will of God.
- Who does the parish listen to?
- God’s voice is always mediated to us – are we listening?
- Learn to respectfully disagree.

...don’t forget the words of our Lord Jesus, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)





# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 4 Take home messages for Sacred Heart

A lot of great work is happening within and outside the Sacred Heart Church community. Despite a lot of effort, we are not bucking the trend – the neighbourhood is not becoming more aware of the Joy of the Gospel. Within the active Church community there is an increasing age of parishioners, especially those involved in Church Ministry. Outside the active Church community there is a declining % of the community using Sacred Heart to learn, live and share the Joy of the Gospel. Some adjustments are needed if we are to nourish the faith of existing parishioners and engage them in the mission of the Church in the neighbourhood from Wilsonton to Kingsthorpe.

However, we are not alone. Across Australia and the world there are other parishes and other churches dealing with the same issues. Many of them have had some success in sharing the age old faith in the modern world. From these communities there is a lot we can learn about how we might enhance Sacred Heart Parish to enrich our faith and to share our faith with our neighbourhood.

Some key messages from various presentations and workshops:

- The Church lives in the Parish
- The Parish is a neighbourhood – not the building complex on the corner of North and Tor St.
- Focus on the unchurched people when critiquing current practices
- Prioritise the Sunday Mass experience with consideration of:
  - Music
  - Message
  - Ministry
- Members of the Parish are called to grow into disciples and evangelisers – move from consumers to contributors.
- The Sacraments are often contact points between the Parish and lapsed Catholics or the unchurched – these can be great evangelisation opportunities.
- Ministry is about supporting growth in the Faith community
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- Discipleship is about Ministry and Mission
- A Parish Pastoral Plan is a useful framework for collective, fruitful action:
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- Any new or ongoing initiative should be based on prayer to discern the Will of God

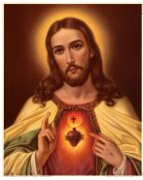
## 5 Ideas on ways forward

Delegates from Sacred Heart were inspired and enthused by the Proclaim 2014 Conference. At the same time there was a sense of an overwhelming number of initiatives that could be considered to maintain and enhance the Church as it lives in Sacred Heart. In summarising and considering areas for consideration going forward, some of the following clues that came through in the conference were considered:

- Prayer is the primary key - focus on Jesus
- Have a pastoral vision for the parish
- Have and honest discussion on where your parish is
- Dare to dream, but, start where you can
- Make a start and look for opportunities
- Consider the people in the pews and the people not in the pews

### 5.1 Parish Pastoral Plan

Clarify our Parish Vision, Mission and Strategies in a Parish Pastoral Plan – but keep it as a “living document”. This will help existing and new members to understand and “Live the Joy of the Gospel” in the Sacred Heart neighbourhood.



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



Pray, Listen then Act. In the Key note addresses and in several workshops it was highlighted that prayer is the essential basis for all initiatives within the parish. Only through prayer and reflection can we hope to align our own ideas with the Will of God.

## 5.2 Prioritise the Sunday Mass experience

Even while we are developing a Parish Pastoral Plan we can take steps to make the Sunday Mass an enriching experience for parishioners and visitors. Without compromising liturgical norms, we can always look to participate more fully ourselves and to ensure others are also able to do the same.

Sacred Heart Parish has a rich history of individuals and groups who have contributed to parish life, to outreach and especially to make the Sunday Mass a blessing for all. However, we can always do more and important areas for consideration in a continuous improvement approach are:

- Music
- Message
- Ministry

Some of the workshop notes in the Appendix outline ideas on ways forward in each of these areas but some consideration should be given to the following for Sunday Masses:

### Music

Music is a universal way of sharing a common attitude and unites the people of God in a more active participation in the sacred liturgy. It is important to let the people in the pews know this. Moreover, it is critical to choose songs in which they can participate. Some practical steps that could help achieve this include:

- A finite list of hymns for use in any Church year. For Example Hillsongs is one of Australia's fastest growing churches and they confine their song list for worship to 30 for any one year.
- Consideration of new Mass parts to be introduced to parishioners.
- Encouragement and support for people with moderate musical skills to contribute as cantors and organists – for all Sunday Masses.

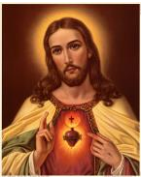
### Message

The message is a key responsibility for the Priest or Deacon. However other members of the parish can support the message bearers by ensuring the homily message is a key focus. This can include a deliberate effort to keep information about general parish operations out of the Mass – or in liaison with the Parish Priest to only include operational issues when they relate to the message from the readings, Gospel and homily.

### Ministry

Ministry is a responsibility of all members of the parish community. As well as contributing to the faith journey of others, ministers grow themselves through service to their community. Key note speakers pointed to seven steps to help build up Ministry roles:

1. Pray
2. Move ourselves
3. Ask others to move
4. Make movement accessible – “Put rungs in the ladder”
5. Set people up for success
6. Celebrate movement
7. Persevere



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 5.3 Reaching out to those in our neighbourhood

Throughout the seminar a constant theme of COMMUNITY came through. Making new and existing parishioners feel welcome is extremely important. Parishes are the lifeblood of the Church and the starting point of evangelisation. We need to help people fall in love with SACRED HEART and make it such a vibrant community it's irresistible to others.

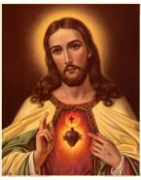
Initial efforts to evangelise should look to support those receiving the Sacraments from Sacred Heart including:

- Parents and children from the Sacred Heart School
- Parents of babies being baptised
- Couples planning weddings
- Families and friends from funerals.

Support can include:

- Inviting them to Masses and other activities
- Ensuring they are made welcome
- Keeping these people in mind when "prioritising the Sunday Mass experience"
- Ensuring the Church and the Mass are accessible to families and young children
  - Give consideration to building and furniture layout
  - Give consideration to safety and comfort in and around Church buildings
  - Consider making Mass guides and Parish info packs available
- Supporting the Parish based Sacramental programs
  - Making participants welcome
  - Following up after Sacraments – especially to determine if parents want support
- Offering a parish based marriage preparation

Personal contact and a clear invitation is the most likely way to get someone to join us at Sacred Heart. Personal contact is also the way we can find out what the interests and needs of visitors are so that we can ensure they know they are welcome as temporary or long term members of Sacred Heart community.



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 6 Appendices – Individual Workshop summaries

Following are informal notes from members of the Sacred Heart Parish who attended Proclaim 2014. Please note that they are personal impressions and ideas only and not intended as authoritative or prescriptive. Delegates are all enthused by the conference and interested persons are encouraged to talk directly to the individual delegates if clarification or further discussion is desired.

### 6.1 Jason

#### 6.1.1 Authentic Welcoming Communities: How do we "take on the smell of the sheep"?

Richard McMahon, Diocese of Wollongong

Pope Francis challenges our communities to "take on the smell of the sheep", to stand with people every step of the way. This is true welcome. Parishes try to welcome and engage newcomers but are often frustrated in their efforts. How can we address some of the attitudes which make welcome difficult?

I found the first workshop extremely interesting. The workshop revolved around making parishes a more welcoming environment. Starting with the look of the Church and grounds, through to car parking and finally to the welcoming of new members in the Mass and other church functions.

#### The Parable of the Welcoming Church

The Parish Pastoral Council of the Church of Ananias and Sapphira decided before Christmas to put extra effort into welcome. They adopted the following strategies:

- Bulletin and Website with Welcome Message
- A sign at back of the church with forms for new parishioners
- A list of ministries with invitation to join
- A welcome tea and biscuits offered quarterly after all the Masses
- Father asking people to say hello and introduce yourself after Mass
- A prayer of the faithful asking those who have turned away from God may see the light and come back to church.



The parish pastoral council asked the parishioners how they found the welcome initiative at Christmas Mass with all the extra people. Here are their findings:

- They came late and it was so noisy and they took my favourite spot
- People were speaking during Mass or didn't know their responses.
- They weren't reverent around the tabernacle
- I noticed someone receive communion the wrong way
- I couldn't even get a seat and the bulletins ran out
- Despite Father asking people not to, some still clapped after the sacred liturgical movement
- All those crying babies - I glared at one mother and told them to keep baby quiet but it didn't help
- Some people left early. Why do they bother coming?
- I think one fellow is divorced or had been in prison - what's he doing there?
- There wasn't enough to eat and drink afterwards because of the extra people - had to get in quick
- I saw some standing all by themselves and not bothering to talk to anyone
- Some young guy was wearing one of those funny nose rings - disgusting! And there was a family that couldn't even speak English.
- A guy in a wheelchair was taking up too much space
- Only good thing is that Father said he was happy to see all the extras but why can't they make more of an effort during the year

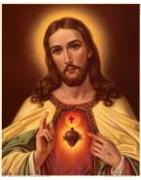
The parish pastoral council were put out by this negative feedback. But they decided to persevere until the end of Easter. Again, complaints rolled in.

- There is a lot of cost and effort for little result
- The welcome message takes up too much space in bulletin
- People aren't letting us know if they are new
- People are not joining ministries, even when we tell them we are desperate. Annoyingly, some wanted to join ministries which were already filled by regulars.
- Only regulars turned up at the tea and coffee and the newcomers won't approach to talk.
- Worse still, Father even approached a few new families that had joined the school and asked them to join cleaning roster and be catechist and they said "no" - can you believe it?
- A few of the regulars are offended by all this talk of welcome because apparently they are doing it tough and are feeling ignored in favour of the new outreach. But they are always complaining, so...

It was concluded to scrap the initiative. If people won't make the effort to connect then they can't be too interested. Let them come when they are ready.

Reflection: What are some of the difficulties with welcoming?





# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

## Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of Proclaim 2014 Conference



### Some observations

1. Building-centric – come to us
2. Passive – forced the one being welcomed to take initiative
3. Attitude of entitlement among the parishioners: Don't touch the furniture, shape up or ship out. You are here under sufferance. You are not welcome
4. Attitude of "neepers" taken towards those that come (eg prayer of the faithful)

### Changing the Attitude to Welcome

**Most important point:** Welcome is not one person's task, or one ministry group, it is every baptised person's mission. We are all called to evangelise as our primary task.



#### 1. Offering an authentic welcome.

Compare our approach to if we were hosting a Dinner Party. There are several steps in inviting a guest to a dinner. Do we consider all these steps when considering our welcome of others? If we are going to prioritise welcome – is this reflected in our budget?

- Prepare – physical preparations, but also preparing our family/group.
- Invite – where are the people we wish to welcome? How will we connect?
- Welcome – when they arrive, how are they received?
- Introduce – How do we connect them with others?
- Engage – How do we move them from recipient to participant?

#### 2. Prepare: How do we change the attitude to welcome?

- a. Start with leadership, and establish a welcome committee early to oversee how the whole community engages. Such a group should not let the leadership off the hook. They still have primary responsibility.
- b. Ensure any committee/planning team is aligned with existing structures and roles (eg parish pastoral council, parish staff) to prevent tensions.
- c. Breaking bread with our leaders – walking the talk. Early on, engage in meal and fellowship with key welcoming committee members and parish leadership. Develop fellowship from within so it becomes "contagious".
- d. Stewardship is a prime way to change attitude – it involves a movement away from ownership to gratefulness and openness.
- e. Ensure group coordinators are fully informed and formed in welcome. Are they excited about welcoming newcomers? Will they be able to support them? Can rosters be opened up? Again, are they breaking bread together, witnessing to welcome.
- f. Engage whole assembly. A time to chat before Mass? After Mass?
- g. Whole community formation sessions. Role plays work well (showing people ways of inviting and engaging with strangers). Videos, and parables such as the one above, homilies, bulletin notes and Lenten focus are all necessary. To change a culture takes more than one bulletin notice. It may require several months of consistent formation and shared messages from leadership.

#### 3. Invite: Offering many, many doors of welcome

- a. Saying hi to people at Mass and after Mass – engaging with those in our midst.
- b. Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- c. Sacramental preparation – baptism, reconciliation, first communion, confirmation, marriage, anointing of the sick
- d. Funeral ministry - bereavement
- e. Kinder orientation
- f. High school orientation
- g. Catholics Returning Home
- h. Parents and Friends, Parent Advisory Committee
- i. Open Days
- j. Picnic
- k. Stall at the local market
- l. Table outside Mass – staffed!
- m. Website – bulletin – signs in shops, libraries, hotels...
- n. Letter box drops
- o. Door knocks
- p. Local newspaper...

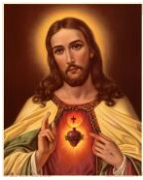
#### 4. Welcome! Offering many, many ways to depth welcome – follow up etc

- a. Welcome of all the community!
  - i. Ministers
  - ii. When approaching or leaving church (or other event)
  - iii. At the end of the phone
  - iv. The response in an email
  - v. The way a bulletin notice reads
  - vi. How people respond at events
- b. Welcome Pack and strategies (hand out)
  - i. Lollies
  - ii. Small cross, rosary beads, candle
  - iii. Prayer card
  - iv. Business card
  - v. Pen
  - vi. Registration form
  - vii. Welcome letter
  - ix. Recent bulletin or newsletter
  - x. Upcoming events
  - xi. List of how to get around in parish and who is who... (may be different from welcome brochure – maybe more of a ministry guide)

#### 5. Engage: What's at the heart of our welcome? Are we sincere?

- a. Do we welcome THEIR group into OUR GROUP of privilege?
- b. Or introduce Church to the ONE AND THE SAME GROUP of which we are all a part
- c. In other words, are we interested in the newcomer, the stranger, for their sake? Are we prepared to hear their wisdom, to be challenged, transformed by them?





# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## Points To Consider for Sacred Heart

- Create a greater sense of COMMUNITY – a theme that came through the entire seminar.
- Improve our morning tea after Mass – location especially. Make it a special occasion after Mass
- When we do attract new members, what are we offering them?
- Welcome bags for newcomers
- Mass Bags for Children
- Parish Fellowship
- Children's Choir - bringing elderly parishioners together with the young
- Website, most people's first point of call these days
- 80% of all church goers first went because someone invited them.

It is interesting to note I was chatting to two people after Mass one Sunday. They said when they came to town they drove around looking for a Church to attend and couldn't actually decide if Sacred Heart was a church and if it was, was it Catholic. They chose Holy Name because of the Crosses and statues at Holy Name Corner. We were standing under the statue of Jesus outside the foyer and they actually touched the statue and said this should be visible from the street. They felt Sacred Heart wasn't inviting.

### 6.1.2 RCIA: Ideas for welcoming new Catholics AND ensuring they Stay

Sharon Brewer, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

I was particularly looking forward to this workshop having myself participated in the RCIA program 9 years ago at Holy Name. I entered the workshop thinking it would be about how to get candidates for an RCIA program. I was actually quite surprised to find most other attendees weren't interested in that, they all had plenty of candidates and were actively running RCIA programs in their parishes. The aim of the workshop was to better understand the needs of people in the program.

There were 3 main aims for the workshop:

- What are our enquirers seeking?
- Does your parish offer what they are seeking?
- Initiated, and then what.

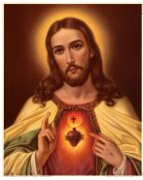
Because seekers are looking for different things, our RCIA team need to get to know them in order to prepare a program to suit them. Most new enquiring Catholics will be looking for the same things that cradle Catholics will be looking for. The message of **MINISTRY, MUSIC** and **MESSAGE** is critical to the **INVITE**.

Once initiated, it is critical that follow up work is done. This also applies to marriages, baptisms and funerals. They need to be asked how our parish can support them and what can they do to support the parish. Parishes need to formulate a plan that encompasses the entire parish.

It should be noted that many of the ideas discussed during the **WELCOMING** workshop were also discussed here. The sense of **COMMUNITY** and **BELONGING** was paramount.

Some ideas for follow up with RCIA, marriage and baptism initiates include:-

- Ask the Bishop to send them words of encouragement
- Help them to discern their gifts
- What could they offer other candidates
- Send an anniversary, Christmas or birthday card
- Personally invite them to events and functions
- Offer to pick them up to take them to Mass



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



- Email interesting (good) internet links and articles
- Personal encouragement
- Don't underestimate the importance of an excellent sponsor

## 6.1.3 My Family, My Faith

Lara Kirk, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

In preparation October's Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis has called upon the church to reflect "with Peter and under Peter" on The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization so that the Church can be empowered anew to proclaim the beauty of family love to our contemporaries. It is clear from the working document issued on June 26 that the Francis sees the family not only as an object of evangelisation but also as a source of evangelisation. In fact family life is, in itself "good news" to be proclaimed.

We know that fewer families are attending Mass, but our Catholic Schools are swelling as parents seek a "values education" for their children. These mums and dads are our target audience.

The example set by families currently attending cannot be downplayed in attracting new parishioners.

Points to consider for Sacred Heart

- If we can attract young families to Mass what are we offering and how do people find out about it
- Explore children's activities. Choirs, Mass bags, Sunday School Little Flowers and Blue Knights
- Advertise activities in school newsletters and as a parish letterbox drop
- Website to provide all information
- Marriage Prep and follow up
- Baptism follow up
- Family/Parish/School Mass once a term where the only Mass offered is Sunday Morning. School families to be encouraged to attend, but parish must make them feel welcome. Emphasis to be placed on morning tea afterwards

Pope Francis says, "Reach out to the Poor!" - Developing effective Parish Outreach programs for your Community

## 6.1.4 Jenny Collins-White, Catholic Mission

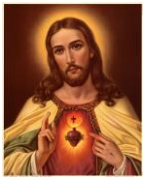
This workshop was run by Catholic Missions Australia. It revolved around evangelising the poor and minority communities in parishes. Once again many of the topics discussed during the Welcoming and RCIA workshops came to light, but with the workshop speaker being Jenny Collins-White, the leader of the St Vincent's Parish Choir Ashfield, an emphasis was placed on music. It seemed like we spent half the workshop singing.

It was heavily stressed that we can't wait for the poor and minority groups to come to us, we must cross the borders and go to them. Ways of doing this were:-

- Choirs to travel to sing for other communities
- Social evenings to allow communities to get together
- Visiting communities to just call in and say hello

## 6.1.5 Group Sessions

Throughout the seminar several group sessions were held in the Civic Pavilion. This basically involved grabbing a cup of coffee and finding a group of 5 to 7 people and sitting down and brainstorming ideas and topics that were discussed during the keynote addresses and workshops. For me this was the most enjoyable part of the seminar. To sit with like minded Catholics and hear the problems they are facing and how they



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



are tackling them was fantastic. I met some lovely people. Fr Michael from Melbourne seemed to pop up in my groups frequently. His parish performed a letter box drop several years ago inviting everyone in the parish to a street fair/fete/BBQ that was hugely successful. He also placed a big emphasis on teaching children and said not to underestimate the effect of having children in the Mass had on others.

I met Deacon John, a Deacon from Hamilton in New Zealand who has devoted his life to the Church after raising his family. His story was very inspirational and confirmed to me that Deacons can have a great role to play in our Diocese.

I also met a man from New Zealand who 10 years ago moved to a very bad area of town. His street contained drug dealers and many other criminals, including a prostitute who lived a few doors down. One night he caught the prostitute and her young son trying to break into his car as she was very sick and needed to get to hospital. He drove her there, and asked if he could help her any other way. She said she had no money to pay her mobile phone bill. He asked the Telephone company to send him the bills as he wanted to make sure her son was looked after. He never saw her again, but for 9 years he continued to pay her phone bill. Just recently she has started to send him money to pay him back. There were many people like this and it was a pleasure to meet them.

## 6.1.6 Conclusions

Throughout the seminar a constant theme of COMMUNITY came through. Making new and existing parishioners feel welcome is extremely important. Parishes are the lifeblood of the Church and the starting point of evangelisation. We need to help people fall in love with SACRED HEART and make it such a vibrant community it's irresistible to others. I have a particular interest in teaching younger children, and I see this as an avenue to implement change to bring new disciples to our Church. Starting with the buildings and gardens through to the activities offered, there is scope for change. SACRED HEART has so much to offer and huge potential for growth, but we must be prepared to change.

## 6.2 Nathan

### 6.2.1 Growing our Parishes: Vision & Practice for Making Disciples (Daniel Ang)

"God calls the Church and our parishes to grow. However, today many of our parishes lack a vision for making disciples, have few or no plans to grow, and can assume that their current members are growing and new disciples are being made, despite evidence to the contrary. In other words, our parishes can be more hopeful than honest."

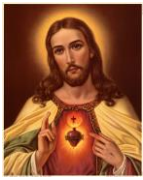
Nathan's Thoughts:

- Striking stats on church people and results of different ways of growing. Through the talk the speaker was continually stressing the importance of a formal Pastoral Plan.

### 6.2.2 Role of the Worship Leader in the Liturgy (Paul Mason)

This workshop provides a brief survey of key Church documents and other sources regarding the role of liturgical music in the new evangelisation. It considers the pastoral implications of what makes the liturgical moment truly intense, shared in and fruitful. It offers a model of music ministry to better support leadership of the musical aspect of liturgical celebrations to provide "the smooth coordination of all - the priest celebrant and the deacon, the acolytes, the altar servers, the readers, the psalmist, the schola cantorum, the musicians, the cantor and the assembly" (John Paul II, Chirograph). It postulates and demonstrates various aspects of the role of Worship Leader, and surveys a number of examples of parish implementations of the model at various stages of maturity

Nathan's Thoughts:



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



- Music is a universal way of sharing a common attitude and unites the people of God in a more active participation in the sacred liturgy. It is important to let the people in the pews know this. Moreover, it is critical to choose songs in which they can participate.
- We need to learn some new Mass parts (new versions).

## 6.2.3 Liturgical Music for Weddings and Funerals (Dr Paul Taylor)

Great resources for use in weddings and funerals as well as a chance to sing through most of them. Dr Taylor explained the importance and considerations behind the selection of music for these events.

Nathan's Thoughts:

- From my experience the funeral companies have been up to date with the rubrics and translation up until the past year or so in which time they seem to have slipped a bit.
- Great resources from this talk to help make the experience better and more genuine.
- I think weddings and funerals are great opportunities for evangelization that are currently not used as such.

## 6.2.4 New Developments in Sound and Vision (Marc Allen)

Presentation of how the *digital world* can help the *church world*. The presenter explained the importance of having professionally set up and run visual and sound systems. He also went on and explained the effect and implementation of this.

Nathan's Thoughts:

- Change in wireless microphones may need checking.
- The technical face of the parish is now nearly as important as the physical.

## 6.2.5 Concert Thursday night

A concert by one of the local parish choirs and it's sub choirs.

Nathan's Thoughts:

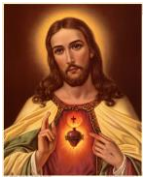
- This showed the great power that music has even when it is not technically 100% perfect. Moreover, the basic more well known songs done in a really predictable way (for me, a muso) was still really good. I wish we had a choir like that (and a choirloft to fit them).
- This also reminded me that live music at the two evening Masses on the weekend would greatly enhance the 'weekend experience'.

## 6.2.6 Masses

Throughout the conference the participants joined the local parish for daily Mass. This Mass was lead by a different bishop each day assisted by a number of deacons and concelebrated by 20+ Priests and a number of bishops.

Nathan's Thoughts:

- For me the Masses had a great sense of reality, formality and solemnity greater than I have ever felt or seen before.
- Giving due importance and solemnity to the different parts of the Mass (such as the procession with the book of the gospel) as opposed to jumping over them because they take too long made for a more balanced liturgy.
- The Book of the Gospel with its procession and such signified the importance of the Word of God and could be used to make the liturgy of the Word less like something that



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## 6.3 Paul

### 6.3.1 Parish based Marriage preparation – an evangelisation opportunity

Byron and Francine Pirola of the Marriage Resource Centre offered some insights into the numbers and motivation of couples around Australia who ask to be married in a Catholic Church. Interestingly the vast majority of couples are not practicing Catholics. In marriage preparation we therefore have an opportunity to share the joy of the Gospel with a captive audience.

Byron and Francine explained how the program they have developed works with “mentor couples” inviting engaged couples into their home for 6 sessions to learn about God’s Plan for marriage and family as outlined in Sacred Scripture and in the teachings of the successors of the Apostles.

Their resources look good and the content is both thorough and orthodox. The resource includes a DVD with a 20 minute presentations on each of the 6 main themes, a mentor couple’s guide and a participant (couple’s) workbook. Byron and Francine offer the product off the shelf or the product with support from their organisation – providing both support for implementation and a level of quality control.

Paul’s thoughts on usefulness for Sacred Heart

From what I saw and heard this is a great resource providing a much more appropriate marriage preparation than others I have seen such as Focus. They ensure a reasonable presentation of what the Church teaches on marriage and family. Other programs from what I have seen lend towards being politically correct as they are provided for other than Catholic couples. They have relied on the commitment and capacity of the presenter/s to embed the very rich Church teachings into the content provided. In this light I believe both the product and the (mentoring) process would be ideal for application within Sacred Heart. However I do not know what is currently happening nor how many couples are likely to need this sort of support.

The program, if implemented properly offers two primary outcomes:

1. An assurance the couples being married in Sacred Heart Church are familiar with the legal and theological imperatives that they enter into the marriage: Freely, Faithfully, Fruitfully and Forever,
2. That we are presenting our Catholic Faith in an engaging and professional manner thus presenting the Gospel and the Church in a way that should foster establishment or strengthening of couple’s faith in the preparation for marriage and, God willing, beyond.

The program is likely to also strengthen the faith and understanding of God’s Plan for marriage and family for the mentor couples through the training processes and the mentoring process.

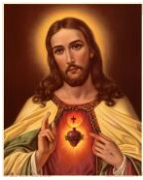
Implementation would require:

1. Confirmation from Parish Priest and Parish Council that there is a need for a marriage preparation program,
2. Confirmation from the Bishop that this program can be adopted as the norm for preparation of couples to be married in the Sacred Heart Church,
3. A pool of 2-4 couples willing to undertake the training for mentor couples and work with nominally 1-3 couples per year in marriage preparation.

### 6.3.2 How to Explain Your Faith without Raising Your Voice

Presented by Fr Nicholas Pierce, Catholic Voices Australia. A very interesting and informative talk about how this organisation is trying to get lay Catholics talking faith in the media, the workplace, family gatherings.... It achieved what the session outline (below) promised.





# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



"This workshop will offer practical communication skills to equip participants to compassionately respond to the common challenges which arise about their faith. The Catholic Voices approach, which has been used in over 12 countries around the world to train lay Catholics to proclaim their faith in the media, works not only in preparing people for hard hitting TV interviews, but for tough dinner table conversations, interacting with people of other faiths, explaining the sticky issues in classrooms or to RCIA candidates or those questioning their faith, and most importantly to compassionately respond to those who for one reason or another find themselves outside the Church looking in. This Catholic Voices workshop will offer practical suggestions for how to explain the faith by beginning with its positive message. The purpose of this is to invite further questions, rather than debate and tension, and ultimately to shed light rather than heat on the Gospel message." - See more at: <http://www.catholicvoices.org.au/AboutCVA/WhatIsCVA.aspx>

Paul's thoughts on usefulness for Sacred Heart

A very useful workshop but not sure how to extend to Sacred Heart. I would need more content practice myself before presuming to explain the approach to others in detail. I would see value in getting Fr Nicholas or other Catholic Voices trainers up for a half day version of the one hour session from Proclaim. However, I suspect it would need to be broader than Sacred Heart to get enough people together to justify the effort/expense of convening a workshop.

I would suggest this may be worth putting up to Deanery or Diocesan level for consideration – maybe follow up with Comms and Youth Diocesan staff who were at the Proclaim conference to encourage, support and promote convening of a workshop. The only caution would be that a workshop would need either Fr Nicholas or our Bishop to be on hand to ensure that in genuine efforts to share our faith gently workshop participants don't develop the habit of compromising on truths.

### 6.3.3 Lessons on Leadership from Pope Francis

An interesting and informative session effectively reiterating the value of getting in and doing something for and with the person in front of you. Also, faith is easier to appreciate on a full stomach. IE sharing our faith with words is useless without looking to the material needs of the recipient.

Paul's thoughts on usefulness for Sacred Heart

Reiterates the value of existing apostolates/charities within Sacred Heart.

Opportunity to strengthen these by looking for synergies/efficiencies and also ensuring that we use these contacts with those in our Parish (IE neighbourhood) to share the joy of the Gospel.

### 6.3.4 Teams Equipes Notre Dame

An interesting outline of how this movement supports groups of marriage couples in their marriage and in their shared faith journey. See <http://www.equipes-notre-dame.com/>

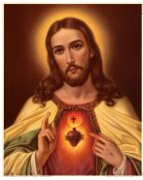
Of note was that "team" meetings are routinely monthly

Paul's thoughts on usefulness for Sacred Heart

Overlaps with role of Schoenstatt, Pashionist and Pacem groups that have or are operating in Sacred Heart. Suggest the introduction of a new movement/process is not warranted but consider monthly meetings as a default option for existing and new groups.

### 6.3.5 Interesting display booth discoveries

**Brisbane Archdiocese Vocations stand.** Good to see Queensland represented and their ongoing energetic encouragement of vocations.



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



## Alpha courses

Alpha is a series of interactive sessions that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith. No pressure. No follow up. No charge.

Alpha runs in churches, bars, coffee shops and homes all around the globe. Typically Alpha has around seven to ten sessions and includes food, a short talk and a discussion at the end where you can share your thoughts. Alpha really is for anyone who's curious. The talks are designed to encourage debate and explore the basics of the Christian faith in a friendly, honest and informal environment. See <http://www.alpha.org/try>

Paul's thoughts on usefulness for Sacred Heart

A range of well presented workshops on topics such as basic Christianity, Marriage, Parenting. From what I could glean, good non confrontational approach. Avoids the controversial issues which may make it easy to present or swallow for those on the fringe. However, this ecumenical approach runs the risk of presenting an incomplete picture of the Christian faith. I would encourage someone in my workplace to do the course but I see risks in a Catholic organisation facilitating these courses (and thus effectively putting a Catholic endorsement stamp) without some additions – EG for the marriage course the stall convener indicated some Catholic organisations have developed an addendum on the Theology of the Body. Basic Christianity would need addendums to explain the Mass and the Sacraments.

## 6.4 Winton

### 6.4.1 "Give me a Drink": Lectio Divina

From the program: Inspired by the *Evangelii Gaudium* we will present an interactive experience, through Lectio Divina, "praying with" scripture and a final blessing. The Gospel passage, John 4:1-30, will be the framework for awakening the faithful and engaging them in a rich discussion about how scripture is the source of our joy leads to a relationship with Christ. - See more at: <http://www.proclaimconference.com.au/program/programs#faqnoanchor>

Some key points:

Signs of a vital parish:

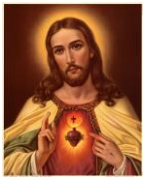
- Experience welcome & hospitality
- Liturgy inspires active participation
- Parishioners recognise their mission
- Collegial spirituality
- Members are recognised as gifted, and are called to use their gifts.

Evangelisation; what is it?

- Growing in relationship with Jesus Christ
- Living our Faith in action
- Sharing our Faith with others. (Most people need to be invited).
- Working to transform society with Gospel values.

Parish is neighbourhood

- Know your parish and the people.
- The majority do not go to Church.
- What will bring them back?



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



- Are we making a difference in our community?
- Are we mobilised for mission or making a difference?
- Are we here to preserve our broken systems, or going where God is blessing?
- Are we needy?

## 6.4.2 Making the Message Matter

Workshop conducted by Fr Michael White.

Consistent great homilies are important;

Why? Making disciples.

How? Focus on Church from the perspective of the 'unchurched person' (Timonium Tim).

Who is Timonium Tim in Sacred Heart Parish?

How do we welcome him?

Focus on weekend experience (Sunday morning 10/11am??).

The message/preaching/renewal in preaching. "Words have power" Prov. 18:21.

# 90% go to church for the preaching (The Message).

It is easy to get it wrong.

12 styles of Homilies;

- Bible Study
- Church chat for church ladies
- Sermons for Seminarians (Theology etc)
- Convincing the convinced
- Nagging the uninterested
- Boys club banter (jokes etc)
- Hamming it up
- ??
- Dishing leftovers (3 year cycle)
- Let's pretend I have a message
- Public confession/public praise
- Let's just be friends

The focus should be on these goals;

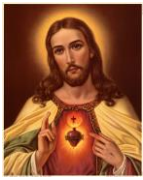
- Spiritual counsel/wisdom/guidance
- The rudder of your church ship (be consistent)
- To change lives. To bring dead areas of your parish to life. (Acts. 20)

## Questions

Prioritising weekend! What about during the week? Keep Sunday homily in front. Develop theme more, or work towards the next Sunday.

Matthew/Parables/similar themes (all in chapter 1?).

The characteristics of 'Matthew' to be introduced at start of year.



# The Parish is Where the Church Lives

Toowoomba Sacred Heart delegates' summary of  
Proclaim 2014 Conference



Use audio/visual and/or feedback where appropriate.

Focus on 'unchurched': This may alienate regulars!

- Immediate tension may be created.
- New evangelisation requires both regulars & unchurched.
- You cannot speak to everybody.
- Speaking to 'Tim'; this includes everybody, including the healthy & growing parishioner.
- The two things go together – deeper & wider.

Men are often not being given practical counsel.

The message: What do you want them to know & do?

To what extent is the Kerygma message included? There is so much that Catholics do not understand. Approach a difficult task with humility.

## 6.5 IMPLEMENTING PROCLAIM\_Toowoomba Diocese\_delegates workshop summary

In the final workshop session of the conference delegates from Sacred Heart joined others from the Toowoomba Diocese to consider take home messages and steps for implementation. Thanks to Sister Elaine Morzone, these notes were retained and documented as follows.

### POSSIBLE STARTING POINTS TO IMPLEMENT THE MESSAGE OF PROCLAIM

- Clarity of mission
- Clarity of communication
- Clarity of members
  - within the parish pastoral council
  - within church services
  - within small group discussions
  - within ministry
  - with associated agencies.
- Ask the question “why” – focus! Ask why more!
- Improve our celebrations of Eucharist
  - Improve our music with more parishioners involved in singing
  - Make efforts to be authentically welcoming and hospitable
  - Explore children's' liturgy
- Examine parish mission statement – [EG] “a vibrant and welcoming community”. What can we do to enliven & invigorate/enact this statement?
- Start with welcome and hospitality – explore these concepts in depth. What does this look like? Feel like? Sound like?
- Welcome. How can this be done better?
- Extend our hospitality to include evening meal
- Foster a greater sense of feeling of community - small groups
- Begin conversation of how we connect with and support young families. Create a bridge between parish and school
- Share, promote, support God's plan for marriage and family within and beyond church doors.
- Break open the Pope's message through resources and workshops
- Recognize that our parish boundaries go beyond those in Church on Sunday.
- Acknowledge that we need to move from being consumers to being contributors.