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(Thanks for the terrific feedback on the Reflection in the last edition of Oceania Updates. An error in the production process by yours truly meant that the name of its author, the Province's Volunteers & Immersions Coordinator, Martin Kelly, was not included. My apologies to Martin and readers for this mistake. I know Martin would welcome your comments and further feedback – Editor)

OLT REFLECTION

Don't Forget the Best

What is the significance of the season of Advent for today?

A German children's story tells of a poor shepherd who one day is led far away by a little gray man, to a mysterious mountain. The mountain bursts open, and inside glisten the most precious treasures. But as the shepherd stuffs his pockets with diamonds and gold, a voice calls out, "Don't forget the best!" The poor shepherd rushes outside the cavernous mountain in terror and the door crashes shut behind him. At that moment the treasures in his pocket turn to dust.

What was "the best" supposed to be?

Was it the clump of flowers at the gate of the mountain as he entered?

Was it a homely old lamp like the one that belonged to Aladdin?

Was it the key perhaps to get back in?

Perhaps it was the wish to go back home and not to forget.

What does this story tell us of the deep meaning of Advent?

Is it, that we are waiting for God or is it, that Emmanuel is the reality of God-waiting-in us'?

So Advent invites us to sit and ponder that it is GOD who waits for US.

...**waits** for us to notice that God en-fleshed the DNA of life with Life.

So new life is born with unique gifts and qualities as well as deficiencies and lack of certain qualities. God is in us present and alive, and waits for us to notice too.

...**waits** for us to notice the myriad ways in which God is with us, always.

We know this en-fleshed God in the beauty and amazing capacities of creation, both earth and human. We know this New-Life-God when we experience intimacy and unconditional love. We know the God-As-Baby when we cannot explain or understand the mystery of a



mother's love for her child.

...**waits** for us to notice when we observe others acting in the image of God. In working together to make a difference in caring for our planet earth, in working along side those who have fallen on hard times or just noticing to do the dishes left in the sink from the evening before.

...**waits** for us to notice the emptiness in our hearts that can only be filled by God's own Self found in quietly being present to each moment of our day.

...**waits** for us to notice the wonder and innocence of little children. How God must long for us grownups to be more like them, without guile.

So what then was “the best”? You decide...

Perhaps we need to spend less time planning Christmas decorations, presents and where the crib should be and more time wondering where God will be born. It is a sign of hope and faith when we realise that people and creation are more important than goods. If we look around with Advent-eyes we understand that we are most human when we are relating with others conscious that we are part of a story of intimate inter-connection with all life. That DNA we all share in common is truly God-with-us. (Jn 20: 15)

This Advent let us recognise “the best” and so begin to open our eyes and hearts for re-birthing in stables, living rooms, parks, at dining tables, on beaches and under decorated pine trees...

*And I saw a man on Main Street
broom in hand
sweeping 3 metres of the street.
Meticulously he removed garbage and dirt
from a tiny area
in the midst of a huge expanse
of garbage and dirt.*

*And I saw a man on Main Street
sorrow sat on his back
sweeping 3 metres of the street.
Wear and tear showed on his arms
in the city
where only crazy folk
find something to hope in.*

*And I saw a man on Main Street
broom in hand.
There are many ways to offer prayer.
with a broom in the hand
is one I had hitherto
not seen before. (Adapted from a poem by Dorothy Soelle)*

The women see God waiting in them, in their spontaneous joy and love. Can we?

- **Br Peter Harney**

NEWS

Announcement – Manager, Legal

On behalf of the Oceania Leadership Team, the Province Leader, Br Vince Duggan, has announced that Mr Bob Young has accepted appointment to the new position of *Manager, Legal*. In this new role Bob will report to the Director, Support and Administration Services, Mr Max Montisci. Bob will continue to work from the Balmain Support Centre.

This strategic initiative is to enable consistent and timely attention to be given to the many complex issues that face the Province as it seeks to streamline its many legal entities, amend its civil constitutions to provide contemporary standards in governance and management, and establish new relationships for the development of Ministry into the future.

The role will also be directed to modernising practices and processes in accordance with accepted standards and statutory requirements. This will include drafting up-to-date templates and procedures for Wills, Powers of Attorney, Appointment of Guardians and the management of Brothers' patrimony.

Bob brings to the role 37 years of senior management experience, the last 16 of which have been working with the Christian Brothers in Balmain. Bob has a Masters Degree in Economics, in which he specialised in Corporations and Taxation law. He is a graduate of the Harvard Business School and is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants.

In making this announcement Br Vince said, "The process of transition from the former Provinces and Region and the establishing of new Ministries and relationships is very time consuming. The Leadership Team is determined to build a more effective organisation as quickly as possible so that organisational focus can be totally dedicated to strategically responding to Chapter directives and the challenges of Ministry for the future."

"Bob's leadership, knowledge and abilities are well-known to many Brothers throughout Oceania, particularly those who have been in Leadership positions. We welcome him into this new dimension of service to the Brothers and thank him for accepting this challenge", Br Vince said.

The role will become fully operational in early January 2010.

Announcement – Oceania Support Centre (NSW/ACT)

Mr Max Montisci, Director Support and Administration Services, has announced the following appointments in the Support and Administration team at the Balmain Support Centre.

- Mr Ian Macdonald has accepted appointment as *Acting Manager Oceania Support Centre (NSW, ACT and PNG)*.
- Br Bernard Gartland will assume direct responsibility on a part-time basis reporting to Mr Montisci for Community and Ministry property and vehicles in NSW and ACT.
- Mrs Margaret Bourke has accepted the position of *Administrative Assistant to Manager, Legal*. Margaret will retain many of her present support responsibilities.
- Mrs Joan Rafferty, Health Care Coordinator, has agreed to increase her working hours from four to five days per week.

Mr Montisci, in making these announcements said, “It is very pleasing that all of the Balmain Support and Administration team have been so welcoming and supportive of these changes in responsibilities. Apart from the Brothers’ health care needs resulting in Joan’s increase in working hours, the added changes in responsibilities have arisen through the decision to create the new role of Manager, Legal”.

“In particular, we thank and congratulate all of the staff who have been so willing to accept the change in responsibilities”, Mr Montisci said.

The changes are expected to be in place by early January 2010.

Appointment – Edmund Rice Camps and Mentoring, Brisbane

It is with great pleasure that I announce the appointment of Melinda McLaren as the Training and Formation Officer within Edmund Rice Camps and Mentoring – Brisbane. This role was developed in response to the evolving needs of Edmund Rice Camps and will involve evaluating and maintaining training and formation processes for volunteers to use in Camps as well as playing a key role in the preparation and implementation of Camps.

Melinda is qualified with a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology), as well as a Graduate Certificate of Arts (Humanities) and a Graduate Certificate of Religious Education. She has joined us from Queensland Health Pathology Service, where she has effectively developed and implemented training programs for new staff and worked effectively in a high-pressure environment. Melinda has also been a dedicated volunteer with Edmund Rice Camps since January 2003, where she has filled a variety of roles on Camps and in the support of the organisation.

Melinda’s thorough understanding of Edmund Rice Camps and her great capacity to engage and inspire people on a personal level will be of great benefit to the programme. We look forward to welcoming her on 11 January 2010 to the Oceania Support Centre – Brisbane.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work of Jess Marshall, Nicole Jones and Phil Shakhovskoy for Edmund Rice Camps as they will be finishing with us in February.

- **Alice McMonagle**

Edmund Rice International Online Course

Like to learn more about how you can take effective action for justice at a global level? Want to know more about the work of Edmund Rice International (ERI) and how you can be part of it?

Then why not sign up for the ERI online course which aims to raise awareness about more effective global action for justice at <http://erisj.org.au/course/> - no prior knowledge is assumed, and whilst it is meant to be informative and interesting it is not an academic course. Best of all it is free and you can work through the material at your own pace.

It is designed for busy people who would like a basic understanding of how organisations such as ERI can work within the UN system to bring about improved outcomes for the most vulnerable people on our planet and for our earth itself.

The course is divided into eight topics containing material for reading and reflection, some questions for discussion and an opportunity for chat with like-minded people around the world – (an optional feature), some suggestions and guidelines for engaging in a simple exercise in advocacy of your own choosing and some quizzes to test your own understanding – (there are no marks or grades associated with the course).

You are welcome to sign up and work through the course individually (each topic takes about two hours to work through) or better still to form a group and work through it together! – **Br Brian Bond**

Employee Assistance Program

Oceania Province employees in Australia and New Zealand are reminded of the free, voluntary and confidential Employee Assistance Program available.

Access Programs has been selected by the Province to assist staff when personal, family or work issues are impacting on a person's well being or quality of life.

Access Programs are independent of the Province and do not disclose information to the Province unless requested. They can be contacted by telephone 24 hours a day and direct counselling is available in a variety of locations, inside and outside of work hours.

Some common issues people seek assistance for are: relationship and family problems; grief and loss; conflict with fellow workers; gambling; alcohol and drug use; stress and emotional distress.

Access Programs can be contacted in Australia on **1800 81 87 28** and in New Zealand on **0800 327 669**. Further information can also be found at www.accesspl.com.au

New Province Website

A new Province website replacing the existing site at www.edmundrice.org will be available at the same address in the days leading up to Christmas. The new site is actually a web portal (or gateway) for all Edmund Rice related entities, activities, information, resources and discussions in Oceania.

Visitors to the site will be able to sign-up as members to the new “community” pages and partake in a range of social networking opportunities. Contributions of articles, news items and general content is also welcomed and the site demonstrates how this can be easily achieved online by all visitors and community members.

Both myself as Province Communications Manager and Br Bob Chambers as the Webmaster along with our external developers, have worked hard to bring this new site to life. Though there will still be gaps in content in these early phases, we ask you to be patient over the coming weeks and months as we continue to build a web presence which will do the legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice proud. Please feel free to suggest to either of us some material for inclusion or better still, use the contribution facility on the site to forward an article on for consideration.

People will note that the new portal has got a great capacity to be the focal point for communications within the Province and among the ERN throughout our region. However, this powerful possibility rests with people taking the time to understand how the site can assist you in your work, ministry and social pursuits.

Over the coming months Br Bob Chambers and Matthew Clayton, who is working as a Project Officer in the Networking, Communication and Development directorate of the Province, will be delivering user training to selected individuals and groups across the Province. If you are not contacted by either Bob or Matthew in this period and feel you would like to understand more about the portal, please contact me and I will assist.

- **Tom Cranitch**

POSITIONS VACANT

School Pastoral Workers

Brisbane Catholic Education have two full-time fixed term (3 year tenure) positions for a School Pastoral Worker at St Peter's School, Caboolture and Christ the King School, Deception Bay.

The School Pastoral Worker role in BCE schools is specifically reserved for Religious who wish to work in pastoral care in the archdiocese's primary schools.

Brothers interested in either position can email Donna Denham at ddenham@bne.catholic.edu.au with an expression of interest letter and a CV by Friday December 11.

EVENTS

(Sydney) – Global day of Action on Climate Change – December 12

Walk Against Warming is part of the Global Day of Action on Climate Change and is being held mid-way through the talks in Copenhagen.

In Sydney the Walk will depart from Martin Place at 1pm to the Tarpeian Way precinct in the Botanic Gardens. People are encouraged to wear sky blue shoelaces.

For more information and for further details on activities across the region, go to www.walkagainstawarming.org

(Canberra) – Ageing and Spirituality: Resistance, Resilience and Change

The fifth National Conference of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies will be held in Canberra from September 28 to October 1 2010.

Registrations are now being accepted and further information can be found at www.centreforageing.org.au

OCEANIA UPDATES

Oceania Updates is distributed by email every fortnight to Brothers, members of the wider Edmund Rice Network (ERN) and interested groups and individuals. Its purpose is to provide regular news and information on the Oceania Province, its people, places and happenings as well as on Congregation issues.

Please send any material for *Oceania Updates* to the Province Communications Manager, Tom Cranitch at tacranitch@edmundrice.org or +61 (0)7 3261 9675.