

Background to the Program

Late in 2006, two Religious Leaders representing a group of interested leaders made an approach to the Team conducting the “New Life Program” at Marymount Mercy Centre, Castle Hill. They came with an idea and a request.

The idea was this group of Congregational Leaders recognised the need for an extended Program which would assist in the “formation of formators” new to this vital ministry.

The request was that Marymount Mercy Centre consider hosting the participants during a six month residential program that would meet some of the needs of formators charged with this challenging ministry.

The Next Step in the Process

In a subsequent meeting of the Marymount Team with a sub-committee who were responsible for promoting the project, it was agreed that certain principles should be taken into account as being essential to fulfilling its aims. These were:

- The Program would need to provide a real opportunity for the formators themselves to have what has been described by others in the field as a “transformative experience”. This meant that the program should provide the formators with an opportunity to renew their own spiritual energy so that they could undertake this ministry with enthusiasm and sensitivity, and with a deepened awareness of their need to trust in the

power of God to lead and guide them as well as those whose formation they were tending.

- The program itself should be carefully planned so that it would be integrated and challenging, but also encouraging and strengthening for them as men or women called to guide others who are being invited to “launch out into the deep” in response to their call to a special form of discipleship.

Key elements in the Shaping of the Plan.

1. An emphasis was placed on the importance of a “transformative experience” for the formators (as referred to above). This entailed participation in some specific areas of the “New Life” Program which have proved very effective in this regard. Careful attention has been paid to making an assessment of which sections of the New Life program would be relevant for both the “New Life” participants and the formators.
2. There was also considerable provision for separate classes, lectures, workshops etc for the Formators’ group to help them deal specifically with their development of the skills needed for them in their ministry as formators and to give them practice in their use.

The Development of the Program – General comments

The first year’s experience proved to be very satisfying for the formators and the “New Life” participants. The process adhered to some general principles that were identified as

essential to the goals of the program. There would be:

1. Emphasis on the central goal of supporting the growth of participants towards personal and spiritual integration.
2. Emphasis on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of participants as well as on their spiritual and professional growth.
3. Awareness of the need for opportunities for developing improved communication skills.

The Content of the Program – Principal Areas

Personal development

- *Encouraging the Formators to develop their awareness of their own personal story with a view to their guiding those in formation to reflect on their own personal story.*
- *Personality:*
 - a) *Accepting and growing through one’s own personality;*
 - b) *Appreciating the gifts of diverse personalities;*
 - c) *Accompaniment that respects personality differences;*
- *Considering Family of Origin and issues relating to co-dependence, dysfunction, childhood memories*

- *Encouraging the practice of Journaling as a significant tool in working with formative influences*
- *Learning from Life's Transitions and Crises*
- *Dealing with issues relating to Psycho-sexual maturity*
- *Leadership, Community and Giftedness*

Spirituality

- *Biblical Spirituality*
- *Prayer*
- *Religious Life as Discipleship*
- *Contemporary Understanding of the Vows*
- *Challenges of Contemporary Vocation Ministry*

Updating in theology

- *Current insights and teaching on Christology and Ecclesiology*

Mission and Ministry

- *The theology of Mission*
- *The charism of Congregations in relation to mission and ministry*
- *Theological Reflection Process*
- *Inter-religious and Cross Cultural Dialogue*

Spiritual Direction and Accompaniment Skills

- *Sessions devoted to the understanding of the role of formators as spiritual directors and accompaniers, learning and practising skills in this area. Practical experience and supervision to be guided by experienced spiritual directors.*

Workshops

Workshops will be organised to provide input from specialists and experienced practitioners in certain areas. For example:

- *Communication Skills, including Conflict Resolution; Journaling; Justice Issues; areas of Canon Law applicable to religious life.*
- *There will be weekly interactive groups combining processing of learnings from the previous week with practising of various skills in spiritual direction, communication etc.*

Fees \$12,000.00 Australian Dollars
Fees cover Tuition, Accommodation, Board, Retreat, Spiritual Direction, group excursions and course-related photocopied materials.

Contact Details:

Postal Address: Marymount Mercy Centre
P O Box 307
CASTLE HILL NSW 1765

Phone International: +61 2 9651 1340
Phone within Australia: 02 9651 1340
Fax International: +61 2 9651 1424
Fax within Australia: 02 9651 1424
Email: mmountch@pacific.net.au



“JOURNEYING WITH NEW MEMBERS”

A Course for the Formation of Formators

*Marymount Mercy Centre,
Castle Hill*

13 February - 7 August 2011

