Reflection

Dear Brothers

In an historic first, the recent Congregational Chapter was prorogued after two weeks due to the coronavirus outbreak. This commenced a period of time where life including church, parish, school and possibly our lives as brothers would change more markedly than ever before in some of our lifetimes. I offer a few reflections on the Chapter and what we can learn from our current situation.

The Chapter was a blessed and sacred time, a time for reflection that will lead to commitment to meaningful and significant change. Generative listening focused on a sense of hearing at a deeper level. The emphasis challenged us to be open to new and emerging insights and awareness that comes from the heart of our brotherhood and our relationship with God. This meant we addressed questions such as:

- How do we live out our religious brotherhood in meaningful, prayerful and life giving communities?
- How are we going to hear and respond radically to the cry of the Earth?
- How do we ensure that the God quest is contemporary but centered on faith and the Gospel?
- How do we continue to search for and celebrate our identity as brothers?
- How will we respond authentically to the poor and those marginalized by unjust structures and abuse?
- How will we be a prophetic and challenging voice in the Church?
- How will we learn from our vulnerability and our mistakes?
- How do we develop leadership structures that will take us into a faith filled future that is full of hope?

Our basic understanding of Church will be different going into the future. A cleric centered church that has been based on power and control will be replaced with Christ centered and Gospel oriented communities where all people are empowered to leadership and wholistic, meaningful and relevant participation.

The child abuse issue raises the challenge for the Congregation to deal with our sinful past with honesty, humility and a determination so as to never allow the culture that contributed to it and allowed it continue unchallenged to ever exist again. We must do this without allowing it to define our past, dominate our present or be the focus of our future.

2020 will be remembered as the year of COVID-19 virus. It was a year when more than ever before we found ourselves suspended between a past that may have disappeared forever, and a future that nobody could predict.

So what does this most difficult year teach us?
It teaches us that Pandemics know no borders, neither then should our compassion and capacity to reach out unconditionally to all. This world-wide disease shows us that in all areas of our life we must recognize that there will be fear and anxiety, but that does not give us permission to hate or judge. There will be times when we need to be isolated and alone, that does not mean we forfeit our obligation to reach out to the lonely and marginalized. There will always be sickness in our world, that does not mean we must experience disease of our spirit as this disease will cripple our capacity to reach out with arms of openness and acceptance to those most in need. Yes there is even death, but our Christian belief will comfort us in the knowledge that death will lead to the rebirth and resurrection of a future we can co create.

The coronavirus has taught us that we must be awake to the choices we make as to how to we live, learn and love today. Are our choices for the good of all people and for all God’s creation as we are only truly alive when we reach out to others, with all the courage and hope of the human spirit, especially in difficult and challenging times. The difficult year of 2020 challenges us to open our hearts so that we can love inclusively, open our arms so that we can act effectively and open our minds so that we can respond appropriately.

All over the world people slowed down and reflected, they looked at their neighbours in a new way and were awakened to the reality that we are one Earth community and global family, a family that needs to celebrate that which unites us in our humanity and our connectedness, not divides us by our fear of difference or what is on the other side of a border.

Pandemics like COVID-19 show no regard for wealth, social status, race, color of skin, gender or sexual preference, neither then, should our capacity to reach out to each other in hope and a genuine sense of concern and action for all people in our community. Now more than ever we, as followers of Jesus, are called to value diversity and celebrate inclusivity within the context of one interdependent community.

In conclusion, Corona is Latin for crown. Many of our schools have Latin mottos including Christian Brothers’ High School Lewisham which has as its motto “Conanti Corona” A Crown to the one who strives. As brothers I hope we can use this time when reflecting upon significant change, to strive to live and celebrate our gift of brotherhood.

Paul Conn cfc

**Oceania Chapter Video**

The Oceania Province Leadership Team had anticipated presenting its Report of the life of the Province over the past six years to the Congregation Chapter and to the Province Chapter this year. With the new circumstances we are facing, when this will be possible is uncertain, and it is likely that the time frame of the Report will have been outlived. A supplement to the 2014-2019 Report will probably be required.
The Team also had a video prepared to accompany the written Report. The video attempts to give a brief overview of Province life over the life of the current Team highlighting significant issues and developments. We have decided to release the video before the written Report. It is available now for viewing and/or downloading View Video.

Child Safeguarding Audit

*Final Report of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province (CBOP) child safeguarding audit by Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL)*

Over recent months CPSL undertook an audit of CBOP in order to report upon the level and quality of child safeguarding across the Province. The audit included interviews with OLT, Brothers, ministries associated with ERMO, CSNU in PNG and formation in the Philippines. The final audit report was endorsed by the Board of Directors of CPSL and published earlier this week.

Read the Media Statement with a link to the full report issued by CPSL.

Read the Media Statement issued by the OLT.

Both Media Releases with the full report are also located on the Province website.

It is opportune to acknowledge the diligent coordination of the audit from the Province’s point of view by Br Shane Wood. Shane was also the Province liaison with CPSL and assisted in setting up required interviews and the gathering of information. The preparation of the audit was also assisted by the Province’s Safeguarding Committee – members of this committee are: Br Shane Wood (Convenor), Jenny Glare (MacKillop Family Services), Jennifer Lewis (ERMO Safeguarding Coordinator), Br Tim Moloney (Brothers Spirituality Circle) and Br John Webb (OLT).

The audit is a significant step for the Province in showing that we are positively responding to the recommendations of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The audit shows that the Province has responded well over recent years in renewing policies and improving child safeguarding measures. However, there are recommendations made by the audit that will improve our current efforts.

The audit was conducted in a collaborative and transparent manner. The audit process was engaging and inclusive of many Province personnel.

Peter Clinch
Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.” (Arundhati Roy)

In the midst of these unprecedented times of coronavirus, it would have been easy to miss that March 24 marked 40 Years since the assassination of Oscar Romero. The 2018 canonisation of the murdered archbishop of El Salvador, focused the world’s attention on one of the Cold War’s most notorious crimes, and on one of its most remarkable victims.

Read More: ERC FACEBOOK PAGE

Appointment of European Interim Province Leadership Team

05 May 2020
My Dear Brothers,

I write on behalf of the Congregation Leadership Team and pray the Feast of Blessed Edmund brings you joy and blessings.

The 2014 Congregation Chapter reminded us, “It is the agenda of the world that sets the mission direction of the Church and our Congregation.” The world is presently besieged by the Covid-19 pandemic and struggling to find a way forward in this new reality.

We too have found ourselves in uncharted waters as our Congregation Chapter in Lima had to be suspended as international borders were being closed and travel restrictions were implemented to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The challenge now is navigating these waters and listening deeply to the Spirit for guidance.

In dialogue with the current European Leadership Team, the CLT is appointing an interim Province Leadership Team to function until the next CLT is able to appoint a Province Leadership Team after the European Province Chapter.

We are grateful to the Brothers on the current Province Leadership Team for the dedicated service they have given to the European Province and to the Congregation. As we move forward now, the European Province Team will be:

- Br Edmund Garvey Province Leader
- Br David Gibson Deputy Province Leader
- Br John Burke Councillor
- Br Tom Costello Councillor
- Br Chris Glavey Councillor

This appointment takes effect from May 6th 2020.
The CLT wants to express its deep sense of gratitude to these men for their willingness to accept the challenge of leadership at this time. Holding them in our thoughts and prayers, let us look for ways to support them in their ministry and show them our appreciation.

The CLT also wants to express its appreciation to Br. Dominic Sassi for the tireless effort he has given to the Province and to the Congregation in the ministry of leadership. Dominic has been in leadership roles for a long time and now, perhaps, he will be able to experience some well-deserved rest.

Brothers, I pray you are able to stay well during these difficult times. And as men of faith, may our lives continue to give witness to the Spirit for God who dwells within us, among us, and in the created world around us. Like Blessed Edmund.

May Jesus live in our hearts; forever.
Your brother in Jesus and Edmund,
Hugh O’Neill
Congregation Leader

Dear EREBB Community,
Warm greetings to you all!
We write to you today to share some good news during these challenging times.

As the EREBB Leadership Forum we are pleased to announce that Dr Wayne Tinsey has accepted a part-time role as Global Ambassador for Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders, beginning at the start of 2021. This role will support the continued development of our global network and work with school systems in leadership development, mission animation and the provision of a quality and transformational education for all young people. This role will be particularly valuable as our schools come out of the pandemic into a changed world.

Wayne brings a wealth of experience and professionalism to this role. He has been a senior leader in Catholic education for many years and has worked extensively around the world, particularly in supporting the development of education and outreach to those most marginalised. Wayne is currently the Executive Director of Edmund Rice Education Australia and as announced last year, will conclude this role at the end of 2020 after thirteen years of service.

Wayne’s academic journey is also well suited to this role. He has post-graduate qualifications in education, theology and justice studies, and has taught these at higher-education institutions. He
has also lived and worked in South America and speaks fluent Spanish. As one of the main languages of EREBB, speaking Spanish is a valuable and appreciated skill to have in this role.

We are grateful to the Congregational Leadership Team of the Christian Brothers for fully funding this position for three years and thankful for their continued support, encouragement and prayers.

As the COVID-19 pandemic challenges us all at this time, we remain committed to working together as a global community and continuing to reach out to those most disadvantaged in our world.

Thank you for all you do to keep the vision of Edmund and the spirit of Jesus alive for many hundreds of thousands of young people, staff and parents we serve each day. On your behalf, we congratulate Wayne and thank him for taking on this vital and exciting role in the support of catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition.

With our best wishes,

EREBB Leadership Forum
Gerry Bennett (Europe), Sharon Van Vuren (Southern Africa), Br Alfred Banda (Zambia), Maureen Kiers (North America), Br Michael De Klerk (Africa), Br Simon Coelho (India), Alberto Olivero (South America), Dermot Connors (Southern Africa)

Catholic Religious Australia

Read the latest CRA Bulletin Board, #12, 5 May 2020

which can also be found with past editions on the CRA website.