

From the Regional Couple



Greetings to all our friends in Teams.

Teams has been a part of our lives for nearly thirty years. Our elder son was just a baby when we joined our first team and he's thirty years old now. It was in the early years of our marriage and we were living in Nowra. Tony was a pilot in the Navy and Anna was at home with a baby and a new house. We were a bit unsure what we were getting ourselves into but found it gave us time to get to know each other in a deeper way and make a

group of new friends. That team lasted two years and then, typical of military life, everyone was posted away, except us.

We were kindly invited to join the original, long-standing, Nowra team and during our time with them, shared the piloting of a new team. We were nearly always blessed with the presence of a navy chaplain as part of our team during those years. Some time later, we formed another team and stayed with them until moving to Canberra in 1999. Once again, we were kindly invited to join an existing team here in Canberra. It meant a lot to be invited to join with a group when new in town and without family. This overall experience has brought us to the point where we wish to give something back to the Teams.

We were members of the Regional Team under Sue and Adrian Fordham and then continued on with Faye and Kevin Noonan. Our aims, as Regional Couple, are twofold. Firstly, strengthen the couple within the individual Team and through that Teams as a whole. The first steps were taken at the recent Formation Day, which we held at the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Our second aim is founded on our experience in the Ministry to the Newly Marrieds. We have been an adoptive couple in the Ministry for 4 years and entering our 5th year. This experience with newly married couples has reinforced our belief that Teams is still very much relevant and needed in our society. Hence our second aim, as Regional Couple, is to reach out to newly married couples and offer them the gift of Teams.

Anna and I have started by developing and running a program that we used for the Regional Formation Day. This program was the first building block to implementing the above. The feedback from those who attended and worked through the formation day activities have been gratifyingly very positive. A few couples have adopted to undertake the program as a



couple as well as with their Team and those in their Team who were unable to attend. As a result we have decided to publish, in this newsletter, the Formation Day program as conducted on the day. We will do this in instalments for all to avail themselves, if they so wish. In this edition you will find the "Introduction" to the day, as well as the introduction and workshop guide to Topic 1 (Sharing in Teams).

There are three topics and a summary of the content produced out of the workshops conducted on the day. This summary will be published last so as to not limit you in your breadth of thought and comment. The topics are designed to be stand alone activities, however on the day each topic added to a larger picture which became obvious in the last activity. Therefore you should take notes and keep them so as to be able to maximise the benefit of the last activity when published. We suggest that if you decide to do the program that you work through each topic firstly as a couple and then within your Team. Practice using the endeavours as tools for the developing and sharing of views or ideas and if you find something you would like to adopt in your life then make it a rule of life for the month or longer.

If you feel it appropriate, you may wish to consider writing a piece for our newsletter on what this program has highlighted to you or your Team. Of course there is NO obligation to do so.

Thank you to all who have let us join in their journey. We are looking forward to being of service to you, our fellow couples in Teams, and to all those who are yet to realise the blessings Teams can bring into their married life.

Our Purpose

**Raise awareness of the strong common voice of the faithful within Teams*

**To discuss our capacity for enhancing our Team and Teams relevance within our community*

**To explore ways in which we can all work together to lead and develop this strong common voice and spirituality (by drawing on the key elements of Teams).*

**Develop a foundation and direction for renewal (formation) of our individual participation in our Teams for the period ahead.*

Yours in Teams

Anna and Tony



TEAM Formation Day, 2 March 2014

Introduction

Let's Set a Scene

"The Church of the future will be made up of small communities scattered throughout the world: Everywhere they will be a little flockbecause men and women will not be Christians by custom and tradition, through institutions and history.....they will be Christians only because of their own act of faith attained in a difficult struggle and perpetually achieved anew..... the Church of the future will be a shrunken version of the present Church, no longer the great Church of Christendom, but vital and comprising only of those firmly committed... arranged in small group configurations, closely coherent."

Is this striking a chord with respect to the path of the Church today. The vision, I have just read to you, was a piece of soothsaying by Karl Rahner and it was written in the 1960's. Some 21 years after Teams was started. In 1939 some couples approached Fr Caffarel to ask for assistance. They wanted to develop their spiritual lives within their marriage. Today Equipe Notre Dame or Teams of Our Lady is the



outcome of that simple desire. Teams is still about developing the spirituality of the couple, and this is achieved through closely coherent, small group configurations containing members who are firmly committed to each other, their faith and their community, wherever they are in the world.

Teams is not alone in this model of small groups. It is a noticeably growing trend that the practice of the Christian faith is transitioning towards a paradigm, which is not institutionally based. Rather, as Rahner describes, they live the faith through their own acts and life experience as both a couple and as in

Teams. What is unique to Teams and which we believe is core to its sustainment, since 1939, is the living content we bring to the practice of the meetings and our lives. This living content is from the resource of our life experiences which we share each month.

We each know the benefits brought to our marriage through living Teams but don't often think of what is the engine that powers these mutual benefits. I'd propose to you that the key elements are the Sharing and the life practice we call the Endeavours. From both the endeavours and sharing we, consciously or unconsciously, frame a rule of life through which we strive to bring insight and understanding into our practice of life, as individuals, couples and Team.

In an article titled "*What is the Teams Movement*" in the Teams Oceania 2013 publication, Penny and Peter Cahalan come to this conclusion, "The practice we value the most is the Sharing." Hence we come to the first of two aims that Anna and I, in our tenure as Regional Couple, are setting our sights towards. Simply put it is to 'Strengthen the Team.'

A Regional Formation Day is a good day to revisit some Team basics and devote time to discussion and reflecting on the very items that give us strength in the marriage and that not only make us strong to live through the roller coaster ride the institution of the Church is suffering at present, but equally able to contribute to the ongoing development of our faith within the Church and community.

Another interesting observation is that we in Teams are so comfortable in our faith-rich environment, in our practice of spirituality and mutual faith development that we talk about Teams in the terms of "married spirituality." Our present day society and future generations are not necessarily on the same vector. So what? Anna and I believe the missing ingredient for younger couples is connection; real connection at an inner human level and a means to gauge ones own experiences in life and to be able to value them in mutual development. This requires trust, confidence and a sense of belonging. All of which take courage, commitment and faith in each other. But more importantly they require that we be able to express our spiritual selves. To talk about faith not only in terms of God, graces and blessings but also those dark spots, which bring concern, anxiety and to some even fear of where life and faith are taking us. A prime example at present, I would suggest, is the declining availability of priests and the abuse scandals and enquiries that are confronting our Church and those who serve in her.



So we agree with Penny and Peter Cahalan from the Adelaide Region, "We need a way of speaking about Teams that reflects our lived experience, not ideals, however good those ideals are." We need to be able to do this to converse in a social and faith context, which demonstrates the strength we have in

our marriages and through Teams. Our marriages are more than a code, or a word, they are a living breathing practice of life. When we can verbalise this we will be able to bring Teams to other couples in our world. The need is there, we can see it in young marriages and in the faces of younger couples. They want for context, relevance and meaning but can only see the pressures to succeed, confusion of consumerism, and the rule of peer pressure.

Our second aim grows on what strengthens us, the Sharing and using our ability as Teams couples to think, write and speak about Teams in a way that reflects our living experience of marriage and Teams to bring young couples into the benefits we all know Teams gives us.

So our aims as Regional Couple are:

**Strengthening the Team through strengthening the couple; and then
Bring more couples into Teams, in our Region.**



Topic 1 – Sharing in Teams



Teams is about helping couples to develop their own relationship with each other. It is important that as a couple we share on our individual spirituality and on our shared spirituality. This will lead us as married persons to see how we want to live out our lives together as a couple, family and Church. Reviewing the past month is not only a good basis for the monthly sit down but also reviewing how we live our lives together.

Sharing forces us to think, it makes us see our problems or issues in their true light. In order to present them clearly, one must think about it beforehand. In parallel sharing builds a spirit of friendship and trust in the Team as well as a sense of a safe place and confidence within the marriage. Sharing also places more emphasis on small steps forward than on reversals or failures.

Through sharing together we grow..... “your home will bear witness in a still more explicit fashion if it is the union of two searchers, where intellect and heart are thirsting to know and to meet. United because you understand the great reality.” You may think this to be a quote from modern times but in fact it was Socrates addressing the School of Athens.

At its core, I think, is the Holy Spirit speaking in the experience of the faithful as well as through church teaching. I would suggest this very experience of the faithful is the foundation block of the sharing that takes place within the Team. In Teams, the sharing of discussion, the study of topics relevant to our times and expression of our inner thoughts and issues develops our thinking, clarifies our beliefs and formulates our vision for life and our spiritual path.

In all its forms, sharing, is an essential corner stone of the Teams activity because the reality is that we are the world around us and we influence the signs of our times by how we participate in community and conduct our lives.

The tasks –

Break into Groups

Discuss and reflect on SHARING.

To Do –

Appoint a Lead person for each Group

Provide Lead with Leader Guide

Provide A3 Paper and Texta for key points notation.

Questions you may wish to consider.

What do we share in our Teams meetings and as a couple?

How do we share in both environments?

Do we feel that discussion and sharing is open or is it constrained?

Do we feel comfortable to openly discuss our thoughts, beliefs, point of view ?

What do I find facilitates good discussion and sharing?

What stops sharing?

How does the discussion benefit us as a couple and as a Team?

Do study topics offer a medium for us to share a discussion within the Team?

Do our study topics provide food for thought or spiritual growth?

How do we use this food for thought to grow as a person and as a couple?

What is the true value of sharing for me?

Leader Guide for Discussion Groups – Topic 1

Guiding the Sessions (Time allowed 30 mins)

Focus on structuring your time to cover both **Discussion (20mins)** and **Reflection (10mins)**.

Discussion component is a group activity.

Ensure you record the key points (need them in Feedback session).

Reflection on the discussion is a couple activity.

Ensure couples advised to take notes (they'll need them later!)

(If the Group Discussion is going well, adjust / forego the reflection time.)

Feedback is to the general assembly (15mins) in the main room. Please ensure:

- * A presenter is nominated from your group – “it does not have to be the discussion leader”
- * Use the record of key points to guide the feedback given to the assembly
(The record will also be posted on the wall for reference during the afternoon.)



Easter Sunday Sermon

We had Easter on the South Coast and we heard a sermon which we thought was simple and straight to the core. It struck a chord with young and old on the day and asked him if he was agreeable to allowing it to be published in our newsletter. After recovering from the shock of being asked he was most agreeable to providing us with a copy. His name is Fr Duane at St. Michael's Parish Nowra and he is from KL in Malaysia.



There are three questions that I'm going to ask during this homily. Three of the most important questions you'll ever be asked.

The first question is: Who do you think Jesus was?

Here is a rock star's answer. Bono, the lead singer of a rock band called U2, when asked in an interview "who do you think Jesus was", Bono replied:

"I think it's a defining question for Christians...and I don't think you're let off easily by saying "a great thinker or a great philosopher" because he went around saying he was the messiah.

That's why he was crucified...because he said he was the Son of God...so he either, in my view, was the Son of God or he was nuts.

And I find it hard to accept that all the millions and millions of lives, half of the earth for 2000 years, have been touched, have felt their lives touched and inspired by some nutter...I just don't believe that...."

It's a good answer for a rock star. He would have made a good priest.

But I want to add a little bit to this answer now.

On this day when we remember His Resurrection, it's worth noting that if this didn't really happen, then the fact is Jesus wasn't who he said he was.

In other words, the question "who was Jesus" is inseparable from the question "did Jesus truly rise from the dead". Or as the Apostle says in the Scriptures, "if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we Christians are the most to be pitied of all people" (cf 1 Cor 15:12-19).

But before we answer this question ourselves, we need to listen to the testimony of the Apostles.

It was the Apostles who claimed the tomb was empty on the third day; the Apostles who claimed, as we heard in our first reading, that they saw him, touched him, ate and drank with him, after his Resurrection.

Were they making it up?

When they went around proclaiming Jesus risen, they were firstly ridiculed; then imprisoned; then tortured; then killed, one by one. Do you think they would willingly go through all of this for the sake of something they made up?

Or do you think He truly rose from the dead? And He was who He said He was?

This brings me to the second question. Who IS Jesus, to you?

What place has He had in your life?

It's one thing to believe that He rose from the dead, but do you believe that He's with you, now, and always?

I'm going to let you in on a little secret here.

On the first question, I am convinced that Jesus was who He said He was. If I didn't, I've made a terrible "career choice".

But when it comes to this second question...who is Jesus in my life...I don't always like my answer. The fact is I often forget He's with me. I often fail to live by his teachings, his promptings in my heart.

I often fail to treat others with the love that Jesus would treat them with; I often hold something back rather than giving everything to others as He did, and as He wants me to do as His follower today.

Most importantly I often forget that He is close to me always; a constant companion, friend, brother, who always listens, always understands, who has a loving plan for me and for all my loved ones. And so I often miss out on the peace that He came to bring.

But the Good News is that this love of Jesus knows no limits.

So even if Jesus hasn't had enough of a place in your life until now, even if he's had no place in your life, what He did on that cross He did to show us that the door is always open. What He did on that cross is the ultimate proof that He will never give up on us, that no matter how often we forget him he will never forget us, will never grow tired of granting us His forgiveness, of seeking to give us the peace He came to bring.

And what He did at His Last Supper was to give us the most wonderful proof of His closeness to us: here, now, today, and every time we do this in memory of Him, we share in His Resurrection, and He offers us a new beginning with God, and with each other.

So who do you think Jesus was?

What place has he had in your life?

And the third and final question, the most important question of all, that He asks us today, and every day: Who WILL JESUS BE in our lives, from this moment on?



Formation Day 2014