

We were invited in mid-March via an email from the Oceania Responsible Couple (Chris and John Dighton), to take up the Responsible Couple role for the ACT/NSW Region of Teams. After discussion over the weekend we eventually agreed that with our various complementary skills and attributes we should give it a go! It has been unfortunate that the process for discerning the new RC for the ACT/NSW Region had taken so long and resulted in not having the February Formation Day in Canberra.

We attended the **Oceania Regional Team Meeting over the weekend 14-15 April.**



*Those attending the meeting were – from the left Bob & Cath Dixon (RC Vic-East), Tim & Susie Jones (RC Qld/ NNSW, John (& Fran – absent) Whelan (RC Vic-West & Fr Bob Wilkinson (SC), John & Chris Dighton (RC Oceania), Tim & Genevieve Power (RC ACT/NSW) and David & Marnie Watts (RC SA/NT/WA).*

Some of the matters covered at the Oceania Meeting were:

The Australian bishops have invited the Teams Movement to contribute to the **Australian Plenary Council 2020/21** (a Synod involving all bishops). We were requested to bring two priority issues to the meeting that could be presented to the Plenary Council. Our ACT/NSW contributions were:

- The Church could learn from Teams where **couples live their lives as men and women viewing themselves as equal.** The Church is male and

clerically dominated and there is a pressing need to rebalance decision making in the Church by having women on important decision-making forums. Marriage is very important to a cohesive society with husband and wife contributing to this – therefore it should be expected that women and men are being treated equally in the Church: and

- Bishops and Priests need to **better recognise the importance of lay movements in the Church**, particularly those focusing on marriage and families. Pope Francis praised the Teams of Our Lady during an audience at the Vatican in September 2015 and insisted that Teams continue their missionary role in supporting couples in their spiritual development. However, there are Bishops and Priests who don't recognise this missionary role of Teams of Our Lady in their Dioceses and Parishes. There is a need for Bishops and Priests to fully engage and support relevant lay movements in a collaborative way.

The **Plenary Council is to be launched on Pentecost Sunday** and is about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. Everyone is invited to engage and be a part of the listening and dialogue encounter in the next two years – you will be invited to respond to 3 questions:

1. What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time? (main points from your dialogue).
2. What questions do you have about the future of the Church in Australia for Plenary Council to consider?
3. Tell us a story of your experience of your faith, life and Church.

The **following links will take you to important information about the Plenary Council**:

- Arrangements for the Plenary Council 2020/21 - <http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>
- Plenary Council's 3-year-timeline – download the [3-year timeline](#) to gain some insight into the planning that is happening to prepare for Plenary Council.

Important points from the **Oceania Regional Report** were:

- There are 47 Oceania Teams people travelling to the Fatima International Gathering in July - Faye and Kevin Noonan have been the Fatima Registering Couple. Sue and Adrian Fordham are the Liaison Couple for the Philippines and have arranged for a couple and Spiritual Counsellor to attend the Fatima gathering.
- Faye and Kevin Noonan are the Liaison Couple for NZ and are travelling with Mons Frank Marriot to visit Teams in Wellington, Auckland and Taupo.
- ERI has developed a web-based study course on the Importance of Christian Formation and is available on <http://endfc.org/signin/index-en.php> The course has a series of modules with the theme 'Pedagogy of the Road to Emmaus'.
- The hardcopy 2017 newsletter is being distributed to all Regions.

- It is a high priority to upgrade the design and content of the Oceania Website in 2018 – a small team will be working on this – Tony Di Pietro, Adrian Fordham, Ron Waanders and Kevin Taylor (web-master).

## Team C16

**O**n the evening of 20 April, we attended the monthly meeting of Team C16.

We really enjoyed meeting Team 16 – we have never been at a Team monthly gathering with so many couples. It is obviously a very vibrant and interesting Team – and the food was delicious! The following was provided by Team C16.

“Team C16 was established in 1995 and currently has six participating couples. Father Mietek Markowicz was our spiritual director until he passed away in 2010.

We meet once a month for dinner at a participating couple’s home and hold a Christmas gathering at a local restaurant. We have an annual retreat at a location away from Canberra. In recent years this has been at a suitable place on the South Coast.

We elect a responsible couple each year who prepare our schedule of monthly meetings and venues (and catering responsibilities – each couple is asked to provide a component of the meal), choose the location for our annual retreat and propose topics for our liturgy.

The format for our monthly gatherings is to start with dinner and then we have our liturgy and discussion on the topic chosen for the month. We include time for sharing, where couples are invited to speak about something important that has been going on in their lives. We end each gathering with prayer.”



*Team C16 - from the left we have: Declan & Ellen O’Keefe, Chris & Sue Mullins, Patti & Jim Witherdin, Vince & Patricia Collins, Mick & Libby Collins, and Elizabeth & Paul Ross.*

# Sydney Sector Team

**O**ver the weekend of 28-29 April, we met with the Sydney Sector Team.



*Sydney Sector Team - from the left: Jean Claude & Hanane El-Sabbagh, Sr Rose Therese Tannow, Marie (husband Tony working) Khaicy, Denise El-Samra, Genevieve and Tim Power, Michel El-Samra, Tony & Anna Di Pietro, and Ghaith & Sawsan Salameh.*

The main matters covered at the meeting with the Sydney Sector team were:

- A briefing on the Oceania Regional Meeting covering material shown above.
- Highlighting the importance of the Plenary Council 2020/21 and that Team members engage in the process over the next 2 years. It was agreed that after the launch of the Plenary Council on Pentecost Sunday, have Teams in Canberra and Sydney undertake the dialogue and listening sessions as a group some time over the period June to August 2018 and have them respond to the 3 questions and forward their comments to Sector Couples (to enable forwarding to the Oceania Responsible Couple).
- Highlighting the importance for couples to pay the annual levy as these funds are very important for developing couples for leadership positions and growing Teams in Australia and countries in Oceania.
- Advised them on the need to establish a Sector Team in Canberra. The reasoning for establishing a Sector Team in Canberra (as there is in Sydney) is to ensure that the ACT/NSW Regional Team primarily focuses on reaching out to couples and offering them an opportunity to discover the Lord's presence in their marriage and to live in Christian fellowship with other couples in a Team. This change will also cater for, when sometime in the future, the ACT/NSW Regional Couple comes from Sydney.
- A Development group has been formed within the ACT/NSW Regional Team and it is looking at strategies for approaching couples. However, it seems to us that there are two main approaches for reaching couples:

1. A Parish approach including their Catholic Primary Schools – this could be aligned with the sacramental programs in Parishes and we would therefore need the support of Parish Priests and School Principals with this approach. This would enable the Teams message to reach all couples having their children receive the sacraments; and
2. An Ethnic Communities approach where communities are utilising particular churches – this could be similar to what Teams have established in the Maronite and Melkite Communities in Sydney.

With this approach we aim to build a sustainable ongoing program involving couples in our existing Teams spreading the word about Teams and supporting couples in new Teams during their early development.

Many Blessings and Peace to everyone

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