



Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy News

From the Lazarus Centre Chaplain

This is the first edition of Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy News— a quarterly newsletter published to let supporters know what is happening in chaplaincy. This first edition highlights include:

- Reflections on the Memorial Service for those who have died while homeless
- The Footpath Library
- Profiling possibilities Betel
- Update on Social Enterprise possibilities for the Lazarus Centre

I have walked the slow shuffle, been bounced around, begged and starved, have been rejected, but the hands and the fingers now push me forward I look to the sky it is so beautifully blue I splash in the big blue of the ocean to refresh my body, to wash my soul I stare into blue eyes and see the compassion, my life again has become my passion

The colour blue is used to describe this situation, but when I look around I see the blue of the sky, the sea and lovely sets of eyes They help my soul It makes me smile Even if it is only for a short while

An excerpt from Am caught in No Man's Land, a poem read at the Memorial Service for the Homeless who have died. Author Anonymous

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Remembering those who have died while homeless

"Where do the most vulnerable sit in our State's priorities...? Society treats you differently if you're homeless." A powerful address by Pat "Spike" Chiappalone, a peer educator from the Council to Homeless Persons, at the Homeless Memorial Service held in the grounds of the State Library, Wednesday 26th March. As chaplain to the Lazarus Centre Breakfast program I was invited to help organise and to officiate at the service. The venue was fitting—amid the hustle and bustle of what is often described as Australia's most

livable city about a hundred people gathered to remember those who had died while experiencing homelessness. That place was the front lawn of the State Library - chosen because it is well known as a haven for the homeless and a place they can go, not only to escape the heat or cold, but where they can enjoy some of the other things of life we take for granted — books and internet access. The grounds

were buzzing with the activity of lunch time folks— many of whom were sitting on library - issue red bean bags. A lively student protest moved off towards Parliament House as the service began. It was meant to be "a grass-roots up" event with as much

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input from those who had experienced homelessness as possible. The service opened with an acknowledgment of the traditional custodians of the land followed

by a poem written by a participant of St Mark's Community Centre, Am Caught in No Man's Land, an excerpt of which appears in this newsletter. The scene was set for Spike's address which was both moving and well researched. He spoke from his experience of homelessness while being able to model that it was possible to overcome the difficulties encountered and to go on to contribute to the wellbeing of others.



Pat "Spike" Chiappalone addresses those gathered to remember those who had died while experiencing homelessness.

As officiant, I was privileged to read the names of forty people who had died while homeless. There was a moment for those gathered to contribute additional names followed by the opportunity to show support by writing notes on parchment and placing flowers in a large bowl. The parchments are to be bound and lodged with the library for future reference. The service was organized by a group from the Lazarus Centre, Justice Connect, Dousta Gala Community Health, the Council for Homeless Persons and Melbourne City Council. It is intended that the service will be a regular event.

Fr Philip Gill

The Footpath Library

The Footpath Library is a group that provides reading material for the homeless and disadvantaged. They provide books to community organizations. Though called a library, there is no monitoring of borrowings and participants are free to take and return books at their leisure. A bookshelf kindly donated by a St Peter's parishioner houses our library and donations of books made by parishioners have enhanced our

collection. There are several indicators that suggest the library is well used. One of our participants was in need of reading material to pass the time waiting for a court matter. During a break in proceedings he caused some mirth in the court room when he produced his book: *An Innocent Man* by John Grisham! Another participant spoke glowingly of a book he had borrowed, and finally demand for books has left space on the shelves

for further donations.

The Footpath Library does offer to replenish supplies but if you have books you believe would be of interest (and the interests of our participants vary widely) that you would like to see well read, please contact the Parish Office.

***“You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me”
— C.S Lewis***

Profiling Possibilities: Betel

I have heard from several people about the work of Betel, a residential rehabilitation community based in the Yarra Valley. The following is a snippet from their website outlining what it is like to be a resident at Betel.

Many men and women say they soon feel accepted as new members of an extended family. Betel is a safe, structured, family-like environment. From 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., days consist of

learning to co-operate and work with others. Whether tidying house, preparing a meal or working in a Betel workshop or business. During new residents' first few months, each is assigned a “responsible” or a more experienced Betel member to help them learn the daily routine, and to whom they can go first with questions or problems. Also Betel residents always travel in pairs or groups. Every morning begins with a half-hour group “devotional” talk

followed by encouragement from an experienced Betel resident or staff member. After the first two weeks, during which every new person stays on site adjusting to his surroundings and routine, residents are assigned to a work team from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Work teams include flyer distribution, guest house maintenance, gardening or guest house duties (food preparation and room cleaning & tidying).

betelaustralia.org



Social Enterprise

The Lazarus Centre is exploring ways of creating a social enterprise as a way of engaging participants in meaningful work with all the economic and social benefits that work offers. Social or community enterprises are ways for nonprofit organisations to set up businesses that offer meaningful work opportunities to those needing assistance to enter

or re-enter the workforce. The key term is “meaningful work”. Through the establishment of a business based on a sound model, the social enterprise offers services to clients; for example, home maintenance, domestic and commercial cleaning, gardening or hospitality. The services are provided by

employees drawn from among the disadvantaged and trained and supervised under the auspices of the social enterprise.

The Lazarus Centre Chaplain and the Vicar are working with consultant Mr Bill Couche and others to decide on a business plan.

***“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty”
- Mother Teresa***