



Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy News

From the Lazarus
Centre Chaplain

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In this issue:

- Adolf Mora came to Australia from West Papua in 2006. Working hard to learn English and supported by community and church groups Adolf began working at Brunette's Café washing dishes. From that beginning Adolf now has his own coffee cart and is looking forward to training Lazarus Centre participants to make great coffee!
- A volunteer's perspective: John and Pat Collins began volunteering with the Lazarus Centre three years ago. Travel and grand parenting responsibilities have meant Pat has had to put a hold on other things for the moment, but John continues helping at the Friday Barbeque.
- Friday Homilies: *Let's put the St Nicholas back in Santa Claus!* I am the regular celebrant of the 7.15 Mass on Friday in the Handfield chapel at St Peter's. here is a snippet from one of my homilies.
- Alex's Insights part II. Alex Gamser, senior support worker with Anglicare currently working with the Lazarus Centre Breakfast Program, continues to offer insight into working with those facing homelessness with the second part of his contribution.
- Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy is funded by the St Peter's Charitable Foundation. Find out how to support this ministry at www.spehcf.com.au/lazarus

Adolf Mora, social enterprise and modeling the entrepreneurial spirit

Imagine having to leave your home country in fear of your life abandoning family and future prospects then coming to a new country, without knowing the language let alone another person. This is what is happening to many displaced persons around the world today but it happened to Adolf Mora in 2006.

While studying engineering in Jayapura, West Papua he became aware of the political situation of his people. His conscience aroused, he became active in protests against the ongoing Indonesian presence. It became apparent that it was too dangerous to remain in West Papua. He boarded a boat and with forty-three others made his way to Australia. Adolf and his companions reached North Queensland on 17th January 2006—a date they still celebrate.

They were taken to Christmas Island where the seriousness of the situation soon became apparent to officials. Adolf and his group were granted temporary protection visas and moved to Melbourne.

Adolf is deeply grateful for the

assistance he received when he moved to Melbourne. Many people helped them settle in, so many Adolf says, that he could never thank them all properly. Adolf studied



English through AMES and RMIT. The Red Cross worked with DHS to find transitional accommodation, a Baptist congregation offered housing for four months until a family from St Hilary's, Kew took him into their home for two and a half years.

Adolf began working at Brunetti's Café washing dishes. but he had higher aims and asked if he could

be taught how to make coffee. He was given a chance and remembers the first coffee he made, "It was terrible!" he says now, but he was encouraged to persist.

Working with Ian Wallbridge at Anglicare's Mission House, Adolf bought a coffee machine and turned it into a Coffee Cart with the help of St Hilary's men's shed.

Provisionally, Fr Hugh Kempster and the social enterprise committee of the St Peter's Charitable Foundation were looking for a project that would assist Lazarus Centre Breakfast Program participants learn skills that could possibly lead to employment.

Adolf now makes coffee for parishioners of St Peter's following Sunday services as the social enterprise project continues to develop. Adolf sees the social enterprise as an exciting project and looks forward to sharing his knowledge, encouraging others and to seeing his own business grow.

The volunteers' perspective: John and Pat Collins

John and Pat began volunteering with the Breakfast program about three years ago. Travel and grandparent responsibilities meant that Pat withdrew from volunteering for the time being. However John, a retired TAFE teacher, continues to offer assistance at the Barbeque lunch. He serves with good humour and is a great ambassador for the generosity the Lazarus Centre is well known.

Asked what being a volunteer means to him he recalls those times when the support of the Lazarus Centre has given people the "breathing space" to rebuild their lives. He feels privileged to share in the work of Anglicare and St Peter's Parish and to offer assistance to those who have not had a good start in life and suffering disadvantage.



John has had to come to terms with the real suffering exacerbated by homelessness. He recalls the time when one participant took a serious fit. John offered assistance until the ambulance arrived. It took the intervention of several police officers to ensure the safety of the participant as sedatives were administered. The participant survived this incident but sadly died some time later from a drug overdose. That there is sadness in working with those disadvantaged by homelessness is undeniable.

Asked what fires his passion for volunteering with the Lazarus Centre he leans forward and says quietly, "For me, it's the Christian thing to do."

Friday Homilies: Putting the St Nicholas back in Santa Claus

A young Nicholas did what many people did in his day, that is sometime return.

in the late third century: following a dangerous sea voyage he made his way to the Cathedral in Myra in modern day Turkey to give thanks for safe passage. There was an unusual air about the Cathedral that day. Church leaders had been meeting to elect another bishop. There was no clear candidate on which they could agree. One of the electors had a dream in which he was told that a man named Nicholas would be the next bishop. The dream may have been forgotten had not this Nicholas walked into the Cathedral. He already had a reputation as being devout, generous and courageous. On that fateful day Nicholas was made bishop elect of Myra.

Legends abound regarding Nicholas' episcopate. One of the most enduring tells of a poor man who had three daughters. Without money for dowries the daughters faced lives of poverty or prostitution. The family woke one morning to see a bag of gold coin on the floor near a window. The man breathed a sigh of relief, at least his eldest daughter would be able to marry. The next morning there was another bag of gold on the floor. Grateful but confused the father stayed up all the next night waiting to see if the generous benefactor would



Photo: <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/real-saint/>

Eventually he noticed the undeniable figure of Nicholas coming down the street. He stopped at the poor man's house and threw a third bag of gold through the window.

Other wonderful stories include Nicholas coming to the aid of three boys killed by an evil butcher and bringing them back to life. He also physically intervened to stop the execution of an innocent man, thus revealing a corrupt system and sending "shock waves" all the way to the Emperor in Rome.

The life of Nicholas is the stuff of legend: how much is historical and how much is the creation of devoted followers we cannot know. It is important not just to consign his life to the realm of fairytale but to ask who was this man that created such a wealth of devotion. His is after all a far better ambassador for the true meaning of Christmas than that other old bloke who lives at the North Pole and once a year distributes the latest gadgets down chimneys from his reindeer-driven sleigh.

Alex's Insights: reflections of working with homelessness II

In concluding the article reflecting on homelessness in the previous edition of the Newsletter, I asked the question; does there really need to be homelessness in Australia? If so, does it need to occur on a scale in excess of 100,000 nationally? To the present time this lucky country of ours has registered over 20 consecutive years of economic growth, a historic record. We've been economic world champions! These have been good times.

Yet our current system has no in-built mechanism to prevent a continued widening of the gap between rich and poor or to moderate a "housing affordability crisis", and disturbingly in these "good times", we see many worrying social and cultural trends.

We suffer from what's been described as a domestic violence crisis, and alcohol-related violence remains a problem. Rates of depression, self-harm and suicide continue to increase particularly amongst youth, and we face an "ice epidemic" as the world's highest per-capita consumer of this evil drug. We have problem gambling, with betting companies finding ever more "innovative" ways of using online technology to make punting, particularly on sport more convenient and available at one's fingertips, and we appear to suffer from widespread manifestations of bullying from the workplace to online.

This is by no means an all-encompassing list of our cultural ills, but these examples can surely be seen as contributors to the breakdown of individuals and families, and therefore as causes of great harm to innocent children with the potential for the type of deep psychological damage discussed in particular relation to the long-term homeless.

Whilst recognizing there is no "silver bullet", making inroads into Australia's level of homelessness I believe is directly related to how

effectively we tackle these sociological challenges long-term. So how?

The Prime Minister recently spoke of cultural change around family violence, and it is indeed cultural change that is needed around all of these issues. In order to bring this about I believe what is required is education. From the earliest, age appropriate time, children in school should be trained in the core ideas and principles around healthy relationships, family, emotional health just as has been done around physical education, drugs and alcohol, gambling and important principles of sound personal financial management. Further, as a result of an unfortunate ongoing decline in church attendance, the young need to be provided with the opportunity to discuss and reflect on matters of meaning, tolerance, decency and the treatment of one's fellow person.

I believe this process of school education needs to be ongoing and supported by unrelenting public awareness campaigns along the lines of what has been implemented around road safety and tobacco use, both of which have resulted in significant change around these behaviours.

The importance of reducing road trauma and smoking have often been stated in relation to their economic cost, and by this measure alone surely dedicated and sustained preventative efforts to bring about long term cultural change that positively impacts upon the health of individuals, families and the community is not just good economic sense but critical to the long term wellbeing of our society.

Alex Gamser
Senior Homeless Support Worker.

The Lazarus Centre Chaplaincy is funded by the St Peter's Charitable Foundation. Find out about this ministry at the Foundation website; www.spehcf.com.au/lazarus. Donations can also be made at : www.spehcf.com.au/donations