

TALK ON CARITAS AND HOW IT FITS INTO MU

Caritas.....What is it and where does it fit into our Christian Journey and into MU Australia?

Caritas is part of MU Australia....it was known as Young Wives and then Young Members Department. As you are aware, MU Australia is a mission and outreach arm of the Anglican Church and Caritas forms part of this. As Caritas is a part of MU Australia, it is important for members of a Caritas Group to understand that the Mothers. Union is a worldwide Christian fellowship, and that its purpose is centred around marriage and family life.

CARITAS means “Christian Love for Others” and our by-line of “Friendship in Action” explains how we work.

OUR PURPOSE is “To be especially concerned with all that strengthens, preserves and creates Christian homes and family life”

“To provide in the Parish an entry or contact point to those who are outside the influence of the Church”

“To be an open, flexible and welcoming group within the Parish.

By being Christian and Anglican it is not exclusive of others..... it is quite the opposite. All people are welcome to participate.....Caritas groups are friendship based and are designed to reach out into the Community, offering Christian love....fellowship and a sense of belonging and encouragement to everyone.... without restriction.

Because Caritas is involved in attracting not only Church attendees, but those on the fringes of the Church and in the Community, the emphasis is not on “CONVERTING” or “RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION”. Members of Caritas Groups grow through friendship and example into the Christian way of life, and nurture and support good family values. The Groups actively support members and their families in practical ways.

This does not mean that God does not get a “look in”. Meetings begin and end with prayer. Also the Parish Priest should always feel welcome to come along.

In Caritas, people find an unconditional hand of friendship and a warm caring welcome.....There are so many people who are in need of the “friendship and caring” a Church based group can offer. However, some people are too proud to say so.....or feel inadequate or hesitant to join a Church Group. Caritas is not only for the young.

YOU MIGHT BE THINKING “WELL HOW DOES THIS DIFFER FROM A BRANCH OF MU”???

Caritas Groups are designed to be flexible in structure in order to meet the needs of their local community and members. They provide within their programs, opportunities for.....FUN & FELLOWSHIP.....SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH..... INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION..... FRIENDSHIPDISCUSSIONS.....SHARING OF IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES, ETC.

Times and places for gathering together are also flexible to meet the needs of those involved or wishing to be involved.

Caritas Groups can be whatever they want to be and should feel free to experiment with whatever type of Group would be most viable in the locality and situation.....such as a Fellowship Group....Discussion Group...Pram/Toddler Group....Coffee Group....Drop-in-Group....Craft Group, etc. or a combination of some of the above.

Groups are also flexible with their names. At present in my Diocese of Brisbane we have the Waminda Caritas....Wantoks Caritas....Caritas Kofi Klub....."Girls Night Out" and just plain Caritas.

It is not necessary for members of Caritas to have been baptised.

YOU MIGHT ASK "Why do we need a Caritas Group" or "Why should we encourage a group in the Parish to become a Caritas Group"???

(No.1) The Need.....What are the needs of the people in your area? What can you offer them? Can you see a need for..... an open Fellowship Group?.....A Group to meet the needs of the lonely, newcomers to the area, single parents, etc?.... A group to encourage people on the perimeters to join without feeling "threatened"?.....A Group who have young children and wish to share ideas and have fun without worrying too much about structure?..... Members of a playgroup who want to stay together when children go to school and wish to support each other. THESE ARE ONLY SOME OF THE REASONS OR NEEDS.

(No.2) Why be a Caritas Group? As Caritas is part of MU Australia and MU Aust. is part of the World Wide Mothers Union, it brings the advantage of belonging to a much larger Group....Looking outwards with wider horizons (not ingrown)....Sharing of joys and help with problems....Contact with others at Diocesan, State and Australian Level.....Having the opportunity to make a difference by having any concerns heard at Diocesan, Australian and if necessary Worldwide level.

With this in mind, it is understandable that all Caritas Group Leaders should be or become admitted members of the Mothers' Union. This enables Caritas members to be fully informed of what MU is doing at Branch, Diocesan and Australian level and what the Mothers' Union is doing around the world. It also entitles those Leaders to vote on their MU Diocesan Council. Any Caritas members who become active in the life of the Parish and develop an interest in MU should be INVITED to consider membership of the worldwide Mothers' Union.

I say INVITED as it is important to understand that Caritas is not for just for "the young mums" who graduate to MU when they are older. Caritas is for everybody (male or female) and there should be no pressure put on members to join MU.....this commitment should come from the members, who have a genuine desire to commit themselves to the Aim & Objects of the Mothers'

Union. They should also be made aware that if they do become admitted members of the Worldwide Mothers' Union, they are not obliged to leave their Caritas Group and join a MU Branch. They can often achieve more by staying with their Group and encouraging others.

With Caritas Groups and MU Branches in the same Parish there can be a great support network. Both can learn from one another. After all, as Christians we are all working with the one aim which incorporates the 5 Objects of the Mothers Union.

(State the 5 Objects)

Dear Lord remind us that-

Happiness comes from loving,

Happiness comes from giving,

Happiness comes from caring, sharing and working,

Happiness comes from worshipping the One who has shown the world

The only way of true happiness. Amen.

When I was Diocesan Caritas Leader and P&D Co-ordinator I realised that whereas MU members have an Admission Service, there was nothing for Caritas members. With this in mind I developed the Admission Service below, which is used in the Brisbane Diocese.....It has been used during a normal Sunday service or it can be used at a Group gathering.....

Leader readsCaritas means "Christian Love for Others" and Caritas Groups have the by-line "Friendship in Action". As part of MU Australia, Caritas members embrace the Purpose, Aims and Objects of the Mothers' Union.

The Purpose of Caritas is...

>To be especially concerned with all that strengthens, preserves and creates Christian homes and family life.

>To provide in the Parish an entry point to those who are outside the influence of the Church

>To be an open, flexible and welcoming group within the Parish

Priest says....."To-day we welcome and admit to Caritas, these members who are prepared to dedicate themselves to the Caritas Group in this Parish"

Caritas members say....."As we commence our journey, offering Christian love to others, we commit ourselves and our work to you, O God.

Help us to live our lives hopefully, to face each task confidently, to meet other people joyfully,

Help ourselves to take our eyes off ourselves and turn them on the world around us.

To be concerned with Christian family life and encouraging those in need of friendship so that our vision enlarged, we in Caritas and MU Australia, may go forward together to attempt new and greater things to Your glory.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

CARITAS BADGES AND CERTIFICATES CAN BE PRESENTED.