

10-E-24

NEW CREATION COMMUNITY (1)

The tragic incident at Brussels caused by crowd violence before the football match between Liverpool and Juventus in May 1985 ensured that the serious social problems which have disturbed the life of Liverpool, North West England, received a lot of international publicity. At around this same time, Brother Damian Lundy received an article for the Youth Column in the magazine of which he is the co-editor, *The Sower*, which he thought would be of interest to readers of *Lasalliana*. The article is written by Brother Ray Raine, C.B.C. (formerly known as the Irish Christian-Brothers) and it describes the NEW CREATION COMMUNITY, founded by Ray in recent years. With it is an account by Gavin Evans, aged nineteen, who is a member of the community, and texts of the Community's Prayers. We are glad to share some Good News from Liverpool, shared by a Brother who does not belong to the De La Salle Brothers but who shares the Lasallian gospel with young people in different parts of England, and is glad to share it with our readers.

The feature is reproduced from *The Sower* with permission.

NEW CREATION IN LIVERPOOL

Ray Raine writes: In 1978 several Brothers, experiencing conversion in their own lives, decided to start prayer groups for young people in the senior section of their schools. These took place once a week and consisted basically of hymns, Scripture reading, a sharing of their prayer and experiences, and intercessory prayer. The Brothers weren't too sure about the methods of running these meetings but were convinced that the desire for prayer was very strong among the young people. Once a month or so these groups were brought together to share a celebration of their faith. About three hundred young people took part in these days. Over the course of these three years the leaders of the prayer groups used to meet for prayer together every two weeks to seek guidance from the Lord as to which direction the prayer groups should take. Let me show briefly how three things (among several others) came out of this.

SIGNS OF LIFE

1. During 1981 riots broke out among the predominantly black area of the inner city of Liverpool, where

the Brothers had moved in 1977. So the youth days were moved to this area. Out of this move emerged meetings between the black youths and the more "privileged" young people of our suburban schools.

2. Over the course of four years we brought four hundred young people to Taizé, home of the ecumenical Brotherhood in France and international meeting-point for many thousands of young people who want to share their lives and their faith. Our visits prompted us to ask the basic question: "Why is it that we Christian Brothers cannot be the centre of the prayer-life and activity of the young?" (Little did we know what was going to happen!)

3. The Brothers started to organise frequent retreat weekends for young people. The outcome of these retreats was that many youngsters had experiences of Jesus which led to new beginnings for them — a life of frequent prayer, Scripture-reading, reflection and, most important of all, a witnessing to others of what the Lord had done in their lives.

A NEW TYPE OF COMMUNITY

In 1981 I, who had been involved in all this and was convinced that the old methods of seeking vocations to our religious Institute were now past, decided to base the formation programme for our contacts (which I had been asked to direct) on two basic ideas:

1. the renewal of the Christian life of young people in our Brothers' schools: in other words, the calling of young people to become CHRISTIAN before inviting any of them to consider becoming "religious";
2. the evangelisation of youth by youth.

With this in mind I invited two young men who had just completed their high school studies to take a year off before they pursued their tertiary studies. At this stage neither had any idea of joining the Brothers, but they were committed Christians who were praying regularly and were fully involved in all that had been happening in the prayer groups of which I have written. They were to be asked to help me with my work in forming prayer groups, running retreats, leading days of Awareness in our schools and any other activities which my job entailed.

The two young men were invited to live with the Brothers in the inner city community, sharing our life of prayer, our meals and our recreation. This was very innovative and, therefore, somewhat confusing for the Brothers at large, since they were never too sure (despite my attempts to provide a full explanation of the situation in our provincial Newsletter) whether these lads were postulants, aspirants or heaven-knows-what. The problem only deepened into greater mystery when it became clear that one of them had a girlfriend and when, at the end of the year, both left for university.

The following year two more young men came along, and in the third year four young men offered their services and together with three Brothers they moved into the Brothers' house in Birkenhead, near Liverpool. And so the NEW CREATION COMMUNITY BEGAN.

WHAT WAS THE BASIS OF THIS COMMUNITY? I POINT TO FOUR ASPECTS:

1. an experience of community-living;
2. a deepening of one's prayer-life;
3. a deeper knowledge of one's faith through teaching;
4. the apostolate of evangelising young people in our schools.

In 1984 eight young men offered themselves. During the course of these four years (1981-85) the prayer groups had continued to grow and most of the young people who had been involved with the original scene had passed on to university and maintained their deep searching for God.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

During 1983-84, when the NEW CREATION COMMUNITY began, it was decided to hold a day per term for all those who were away at College in various parts of the country. The day was to offer a support for them who were trying to lead their Christian lives under trying and, at times, really difficult circumstances. These days were so well attended that in September 1984 it was felt that these "associates" should have some form of identity, so they were invited to commit themselves to the Lord for a year, through a commitment which involved prayer and service and some form of association with the New Creation Community. They were called *disciples*, since they had been commissioned by the Community in twos and threes around the country. At the moment (May 1985) there are over sixty NEW CREATION disciples who meet to pray in different parts of the country. I keep in touch with them by visits and by newsletters frequently. These young people (boys and girls) are perhaps at a half-way stage towards a formal association with the Brothers.

In September 1985 the New Creation Youth Community will move to the inner city of Liverpool to be associated with the Brothers' work there and to form a new centre for youth along the lines of the San Egidio community in Rome. There is also the possibility of setting up a girls' community in the same part of Liverpool. We see what is happening in Liverpool as part of the movement in our Church towards a new lay form of Gospel Community.

NEW CREATION DISCIPLES

Prayer of Commitment

(to be recited as frequently as possible)

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ.

Before the world was made he chose us, chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless and to live through love in his presence. (Eph 1:3-4).

Jesus, I praise you for living within me forever.

I thank you for having chosen me to carry out your will today.

I thank you for the gifts that you have given me to do your work today.

I thank you Jesus for the people and the situations that you place before me today.

Increase within me, Jesus, the gifts you have already given me so that I may become the person that I was called to be.

I place myself now into your hands this day so that whatever I do, whether I eat or drink, whatever I do at all, I do for your glory. (1 Cor 10.31) Give me an increase in faith so that I may have the courage and strength to carry out your will today even in the most difficult and trying circumstances.

Help me now, dear Jesus, to make a commitment to be a faithful disciple of the New Creation Community. Help me in my daily prayer, in the reading of your Word and in serving those in need around me.

Watch over and protect all disciples of the community today (mention here any in particular) throughout this country. Make us one with you in mind and heart so that we can experience always the love and peace which only you can give.

Help me to be faithful to my promises so that I may grow and 'increase in wisdom, in stature and in favour with God and men'. (Luke 2:52).

So I ask you, Jesus, to accept my life today as a disciple of the New Creation Community until ...

Glory be to him whose power, working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20-1).

Mary, mother of Jesus, pray for me.

Edmund Rice help me.

Live Jesus in our hearts forever.

Signed

Date

(please return one of the copies to me)