

What I did:

My project to write this book, and to collaborate in the writing came as a response to something that didn't work. Carrie Sanders is the musician for prayer and liturgy at St. Vincent Pallotti Catholic School. Carrie frequently commented at the impact she observed in the children at Mass over time from her place on the concert grand piano bench. She commented on what she saw as distinctly unique: a palpable community presence with students who come from many backgrounds, and who come to us from all over the city. The question came, "Would you work with me to put together a workshop on children's spirituality and tell 'how' we build community to foster distinct and experienced spiritual awareness with students." In February of 2013, I was accepted as a Van Lunen Fellow and the following summer came to a close; but, the flow of thought and inspiration from that amazing *Great Whites* experience, coupled with the opportunity to design a project to benefit each of our own schools, connected even more concretely to the initial speculations for Carrie's and my book.

Of the 100 some work pages of writing, remembering, defining, delineating, we have arrived at a model for the book which will comprise seven sections. They are:

- Pay attention
- Tell
- Weekly Community Times
- Time away – Retreats
- Elements of a Monastic Model for School
- Show us the face of Christ...in each other's eyes...courage to look deeply.

We are currently revising the three sections of Weekly Community Times. We have yet to write Time away and Elements of a Monastic Model for School. The last section is additional stories to inspire and teach what authentic community building can evoke. Three are written, and we have outlining and core content for over ten other stories; some will appear in the book.

What did I learn? One difference that I see 'writing the book' making is that in my eighth year in this school, I experience the need for the focus on our vision and mission to remain breathing, and it must be able to be witnessed in our words and actions around school. This takes time, due diligence, as well as prayer and reflection. This is a building block of making a felt community experience in school every day, all day with students and faculty. I find that I pay attention and listen better to everything. This has a surprise effect for me in that I see others around me also trying. Even parents come with stories of the impact of school community. The next step which cannot be missed is: to tell. Tell who we are all the time. Tell stories of daily transactions among us that show who we are. I find that I am more and more aware of how real the Old Testament adage is: without vision the people perish.

What difference will it make? The book is a telling of stories of active faith, love, inspiration, which are the direct fruits of life lived in the school community, day to day, season to season. Pragmatically, the book will provide some of the forms we have designed for prayer, retreat, and other community building spiritual practices. Spiritually, the book will link real stories of what comes from participating in the various community gatherings throughout the year, and what comes from consciously practicing living as brothers and sisters loved and created by God.