

## CHRISTMAS 2012 STAFF LUNCH ADDRESS



Good afternoon everyone and it's Christmas lunch again. This year has gone very fast and has been very full. For me it is always a joyous experience whenever so many Centrecare people come together in the one place. The coming together of individuals that are united in the one aim and inspired by a spirit that is founded in the love of others can be nothing else but a happy and uplifting occasion.

We need each other to continue to believe in our values and to share our disappointments and achievements. This need for others is what drives our work. This is the result not only of our need to be a genuine and relevant presence in the world but also a response to the need that others have for companionship and heartfelt connection.

It is my constant appeal to you to continue to believe in what you do and in the values that drives your actions. This appeal is based on the belief that a world without heart is a desolate and forbidding one. No matter how far our intellectual prowess may lead us it pales into insignificance when compared to the heights to which love can take us. Our capacity to love and our confidence in the ability of others to also experience and share in that love is what ultimately drives our commitment to our work and our trust in others.

We have seen only very recently the heartache that can occur when love goes missing. In Newtown, Connecticut love disappeared for a few hours and tragedy struck creating a void that was, and for many still remains, both deep and dark. However, love was not far away. It emerged in the selfless response of those teachers that desperately tried to save the children. It expressed itself in the heartfelt coming together of a distressed and traumatised community. So, even at such a horrific time what triumphed was love. A love that had many manifestations, whether through flowers, teddys, hugs, tears or heartfelt silence.

At Centrecare we are often the witness of this absence of love whether in our counselling rooms or in the homes that we visit. We can see the destruction that such absence creates. What we are called to do is to help others believe and then see the power that is invariably present within them to change their lives. As one of our clients said

*"(The service) has certainly allowed me a greater sense of awareness of the impact of abuse in the relationship...I have more awareness and knowledge to lead a fulfilling life."*

This is not easy work and we can't do it without retaining our own conviction in the capacity of each us to rise above the emptiness and the distress that we can all feel from time to time.



In the wake of the Newtown tragedy, President Obama called on the American people to change so that such an event would not be repeated. We are all called to regularly examine our lives and our communal views.

Each of us is not unsullied from the ongoing abuse of children in our Australian community, or the suffering of the bulk of Aboriginal people or the mistreatment of refugees who are re-traumatized on reaching our shores. These experiences tarnish our collective as well as our individual souls. We are all the poorer when we immerse ourselves in useless intellectual debates about issues that can only be resolved when we see them through our heart's eye. Only by allowing ourselves to look at these matters with an open heart can we arrive at responses that are both ethical and practical. It is our role, both individually and collectively, to remind ourselves, our friends, neighbours and others of this inescapable reality.

When I see that so many of you are committed to open heartedness, then there can be no doubt that the world is a good place, despite all its difficulties.

This is what Christmas is all about a belief in new and abundant life and undying hope. It is a tale of infinite love and a call to faith in the transcendence of the human spirit and an invitation to believe that we are more than what we see and feel.

Thank you for all your efforts throughout the year. You will see shortly the many things we have achieved together. Suffice it to say that the many thousands of people we have assisted, the hundreds of meetings we have attended and the large number of reports and other administrative tasks we have fulfilled in the past twelve months is the result of your commitment and hard work. You have much to be proud of.

So, it's time to celebrate Christmas and as we say in our values statement, when Centrecare celebrates it is:

*Celebrating the beauty of life, friendship and the resilience and achievements of the human spirit.*

So, let's do just that and have a good time and let me wish you, your family and friends a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

Tony Pietropiccolo AM

Director