

## FAITH & LIFE

# Catholic business group facilitates networking, faith-building

Members meet and get to know one another and about business morality through bi-monthly talks and sharing

By Darren Boon

**SINGAPORE** – Theresa Young, a consultant, has been attending a few bi-monthly meetings at the Catholic Business Network (CBN) since Jan 2009. She has been roped in as a volunteer for CBN's membership sub-committee.

Amidst the volunteering, Ms Young has made many new friends, and the bi-monthly events that include talks by invited guest speakers and sharing amongst members helps her to "strengthen her relationship with God". She said, "The talks are informative and the contents appropriate."

In the last bi-monthly meeting held on Jul 10 at the Caritas Singapore Community Council, Dominican Father David Garcia presented a talk 'Spirituality at Work the Business of the Kingdom' which set Ms Young thinking.

Father David posed a question 'What is good business?' to the 50 who were present that evening. Good business to Ms Young usually means managing costs and bottom lines, staff morale, staff turnover and sales. It never occurred to her to reflect on how people's lives are affected by one's business – which Father David highlighted – whether a business helps improve lives,

and serve the common good of society through the production of useful goods and services.

"This gives me a different perspective to how I view my business," she said.

Father David also told the attendees that the role of the laity is to make an impact and difference to the world, and stated the Church's stand is that everyone has a right to "economic initiative" and to start a business. He encouraged those present to do their best and to know that "God is working to move things in the correct direction", and to constantly reflect on whether one is doing the right thing in

business as opposed to what can God do for one's business.

"Spirituality at work is not about adding spiritual things. It is about shaping our work so that it fits our faith," Father David said.

Patrick Tan, 34, who runs his own online marketing consultancy, was attracted to the idea of the "coming [together] of business owners of the same faith who want to contribute to the faith community through their talents in business while supporting each other in various business aspects". He hopes to learn more about work-faith integration.

A first time participant, he felt relaxed and comfortable with

the deep sharing of the other participants of both the business and personal faith experiences. At other business networking events he had attended, participants were overwhelmingly enthusiastic due to potential business benefit involved.

Mr Tan is excited over exploring various working relationships with three of that evening's talk attendees with a possible business agreement based on the parties' common Catholic values as the foundation of a new relationship. "For the first time, my client-to-be actually said 'Let's pray about this,'" he said.

"I am sure there are many good

opportunities ahead to work with other fellow Catholics either in business or using our business experience to help grow other non-profits and charities in the Catholic community," he continued.

Leonard Nathan, 41, media consultant, and another first time participant said that event and theme that evening was a reminder to him to do his best to practise his faith in his work. He aims to be a fair, objective and humble employer, to motivate his staff and give them opportunities to perform and excel, and not to be affected by office gossip and politics.

"I constantly seek the Lord's help to guide me along the way in the decisions I make," he said. The bi-monthly talks are designed to challenge members on how to better live their faith in their work or how to better carry out their work by virtue of their faith. The sharing sessions that follow the talk enables the members to mingle, network and share their experiences with one another.

CBN's Vice-chairman Vivienne Lim, a lawyer, told Catholic News that CBN is encouraged by the turnout of 30 to 40 members at each event, and hopes to organise more events to meet the members' requests.

CBN has about 100 members and aims "to bring Catholic business owners and professionals in Singapore (together), inculcating Catholic values and ethics in their work, and to encourage its members to serve the broader community". □

Participants at the Catholic Business Network bi-monthly meeting go into a group sharing session after a talk by Father David Garcia. Photo by Darren Boon

