Through community engagement we participate in ushering in the Reign of God. We are involved in the healing and restoration of humanity and creation; in so doing, we conform more to what God desires and intends. In this way we share in the mission of Jesus Christ, a mission which will see a new age dawn, the long reign of sin ended, a broken world renewed, and humanity once again made whole.\(^2\)

But in case it all sounds too demanding, too complicated, too hard, a great saying from the Scriptures sums it up simply and succinctly. It is worth letting this saying inspire our community engagement:

...WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU
BUT TO DO JUSTICE, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS,
AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?
(MICAH 6:8)

For more information please contact the author:

**Anthony Steel**
Institute for Advancing Community Engagement
Australian Catholic University
25a Barker Road, Strathfield
NSW Australia 2135
Phone: +61 2 9701 4346
Fax: +61 2 9701 4096
Email: anthony.steel@acu.edu.au
Web: www.iace.acu.edu.au

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1 These three obstacles to community and human flourishing are recurring themes in the writings of Richard Rohr, ofm. See, for example, his *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010, p. 96) and *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations* (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1995, p. 18).

2 Adapted from the Preface of Easter IV
With these words, the Bible asserts the goodness of all creation. However, we know from both history and our own experience that this state of original blessing, peace and harmony was not sustained. Sin entered the world, and disfigured it.

The reality is that human selfishness and greed have thwarted God’s will. When the drive for possessions, power and privilege becomes more important than relationships, solidarity and community, we build a world that bears little resemblance to what God desires.

Significantly, building community is fundamental to Australian Catholic University. At the University, community engagement is not optional, but is integral to living a good life and making a positive contribution to the world. We take seriously the task of transforming the world, and restoring it to reflect what God desires.

Community engagement is also attentive to the environment and the whole of creation. We read in the Scriptures that God placed Adam in the garden of Eden to till it and to care for it. Human beings are stewards of creation. We are called to use its gifts responsibly and to care for it, in order that the generations who come after us might also enjoy its gifts and benefits. To do so we need to practise the virtues of respect, trustworthiness, humility and great hope for the future.

This is the work of ushering in the Reign of God here and now. The Reign of God (kingdom of God) becomes present when human beings are in right relationship with one another; where justice prevails, so that everyone has what they need to live a decent and fulfilling human life, the “life to the full” referred to by Jesus. (John 10:10)

This is a mission built on human dignity, directed towards establishing justice and restoring hope. It gives concrete expression to God’s preferential option for the poor, while inviting us to work for the common good in solidarity and collaboration with all God’s children. It is Jesus’ mission, in which we share by virtue of our baptism and our commitment to be men and women of hope in the world.

Community engagement calls us into mutual relationships with poor, oppressed and vulnerable communities. It requires that we ‘work with’ people rather than ‘do for’ them; that we act collaboratively to make a difference in our world; and that each person and community remains open to being influenced by the other, and changed.

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