

NCCA 10th National Forum, Canberra 21-24 June 2019

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: A PERSONAL REFLECTION.

Our theme for this Forum is 'Living and Walking in Holy Spirit: called to Transforming Discipleship'.

Here is a personal reflection.

1. Discipleship in Daily Life

Jesus in the Gospels is so relational and so imaginative with people.

His modelling of how we are to live comes to us, Word and Spirit intersecting.

What if people showed generous mercy, like the Good Samaritan?

What if people forgave each other lavishly, like the father of the Prodigal Son?

The Holy Spirit is prompting us to be like Jesus in daily life, yes?

Relating to people with careful attention and with a generosity of spirit.

Like Jesus with the woman who touches his cloak, seeking healing.

Like Jesus, changing direction and plans when a father asked for help for his sick child. (Luke 8, for both)

So, following Jesus, we are urged in daily life to relate with generosity, imagining the best for people; carefully applying our spiritual disciplines and our devotional practices in service.

This Forum is an opportunity to share our learnings, receptive to and grateful for one another.

Together we can thus participate in the renewal of our Australian church, grateful for Jesus' promise that we have the Holy Spirit to help us, 'who lives with us and in us' (John 14:17).

2. So, what else are we asked to imagine and implement in and through our NCCA?

Here are some suggestions for your consideration:

Einstein once remarked, with genius, that 'you cannot solve a problem at the same level of thinking that created it' ...

Each of these suggestions need the Holy Spirit's further inspiration:

- **A Safe Church**

Imagine if all the recommendations from the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse** were fully implemented by the time of our next Forum and all our member Churches have tight, very tight regulatory regimes!

Imagine that we could therefore be confident all our Churches are safe.

Safe for children, safe.

Imagine that!

- **An Australia Free of Slavery**

Remembering the moral drive of those before us, like William Wilberforce, imagine if the Federal **Parliament's Modern Slavery Act** was fully implemented.

No trace of slavery or exploitation in our supply chains.

The highest standards of protection offered to those on temporary visas - like student backpackers and Pacific Island workers.

Imagine that!

What might our next steps be from this Forum?

- **An Australia which is a leader in preventing climate change**

Like for a Safe Church, there are, with this issue, clear recommendations on what is required to keep global temperatures from rising.

There is an evolving regulatory regime provided by the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.

There are next steps within this UN process.

There is a meeting taking place in Bonn now (June 17-27). It is the UNFCCC Intersessional Climate Change Conference.

It leads on to the next UNFCCC 25 in Santiago, Chile, December 2-15.

In between, the UN Secretary- General is calling national leaders to a summit in New York, September 23.

These meetings must not fail.

The sense of informed urgency is now heard more clearly.

It is seen when an international religious leader like Pope Francis meets, as he did last week, with CEO' s of oil and gas companies. One of many leadership initiatives he has taken.

It is seen in national programs like the UK's emission target of net zero by 2050.

It is seen in revised investment plans of major companies.

It is seen in 'youth strike' demands and in the calls for a better partnership between 'faith and science'.

It is seen in our own personal reflections on more 'sustainable lifestyles'.

And it is seen in Holy Spirit prompted cooperation such as that we have, interreligiously, with the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) and internationally with the WCC, the Brahma Kumaris and the Anglican Communion's Environment Network.

(We are involved together in offering an Interreligious Retreat Program to negotiators at the COP25 in Chile this December).

So, through our Forum, how can we better inspire our nation to be a leader in preventing further climate change, the Holy Spirit guiding?

- **Preventing Violence , Creating Peace**

We are aware of the violence women and children suffer domestically.

We are aware of the violence that targets people as they worship - in a synagogue, a mosque, a church on Easter Sunday.

We are aware of the terrible threat that hangs over us as nations modernise their nuclear weapons and refuse to give them up (notwithstanding the promises they have made under the

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and with some 2000 of the 13, 865 nuclear weapons in 'a high state of readiness' with 90% of all nuclear weapons in nations currently led by Mr Trump and Mr Putin!)

We are aware of the violence that causes people to become refugees and we continue to try and help, much troubled by the plight of those still on Manus and Nauru.

We are aware, finally, and so importantly in our own nation, of the unfinished pilgrimage of reconciliation, after the violent dispossession of our indigenous people...I wear a cross, painted by aboriginal priest Revd Robyn. It helps me keep praying for reconciliation, as it bounces on my heart.

So, we are aware of much violence in the one human family, all of us made in the divine image and likeness.

The first gift of our Risen Jesus was peace (John 20: 19-29) and He calls us to be peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9).

3. Conclusion

Living and Walking in Holy Spirit , called to Transforming Discipleship, here and now in Australia , through our NCCA , in ever deeper unity , receptive to one another 's insights , is this a picture of what our Lord imagines for us?

Is it daunting? Yes!

Was it daunting when 12 or so were given the Great Commission? (Matthew 28: 16-20)

Yes, no doubt! 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.'

Yes, but well, here we are, in this amazing Australia, home to people from all nations, disciples ourselves.

Made disciples. Making disciples. As we try to listen and be obedient to the Holy Spirit's promptings.

Paraphrasing a shared wisdom:

The problems seem huge.

What we can do about them can seem insignificant.

Nevertheless, it is essential that we do it!

That which we can do, we must do!

So, to reiterate, this is my personal reflection on our theme.

For me it means:

- Making the love of Jesus visible in the generous and imaginative way we relate to people in daily life;
- Making sure our churches in Australia are safe;
- Helping to eliminate all forms of slavery;
- Helping to prevent a climate crisis;
- Trying to be better peace- makers, amidst much violence.

After a few quiet moments, please give consideration to the two questions provided.

- Inspired by the Holy Spirit, following Jesus, what is your personal reflection on our calling now?
- What do you hope for from this NCCA 10th Forum?

With prayers now and gratitude for you all,

Bishop Philip Huggins



Traditional Greek Byzantine art
Jesus blessing a family