
Pathways of Presence: Being and Resourcing

National Catholic Resource Centres Network Conference

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The NCRC Network Conference was held in Brisbane
30 June - 03 July 2002

Susan Melhuish has been the Coordinator of Catholic Resource & Information Service (CRIS) for nearly two years.

The centre, located at 112 Kintore St, Thebarton S.A. and previously known as the Diocesan Resource Centre, supports the Catholic Education Office and Catholic schools in South Australia.

The complete catalogue of CRIS holdings is available at <http://web.ceo.adl.catholic.edu.au/cris.html>.

Susan has developed many hyperlinks to websites within the CRIS catalogue.

Introduction

It's always interesting being part of a library network. You meet such interesting people and are exposed to many new ideas, insights and methodology.

For those of you who don't know about the NCRCN, it is a network that exists to provide mutual support for members involved in the provision and promotion of services and resources for religious education and faith development in the Australian Church and community.

The mission statement emphasises a commitment to supporting religious education and faith development by meeting annually, communicating regularly, exchanging information, advocating quality media and resources and sharing diverse experiences and expertise to enrich personal development and the work environment.

A Theology Of Presence

The Conference, held annually, had as its theme Pathways of Presence: Being and Resourcing. The first session presented by Jill Gowdie (Multi-Media Centre In-Service Consultant) was entitled 'All Or Nothing: A Theology Of Presence'.

Jill asked three pertinent questions:

- What is a theology of presence?
- Who is Jesus?
- Who are we?

She discussed how one lives a spirituality of presence using story, a sense of moment and company. Jill pointed out that in the early years of the Jesus 'movement', the followers of Jesus were called people of 'the way'. With Jesus living among them this way required recognition of God in them, with them and around them.

This changed people's perception of how they see each other and their world. Such a "God-in-all-people" experience was the central insight and challenge to everyday life in these early followers. In our contemporary world there is the need for authentic

experience. Using a theology of presence the focus is moved "in understanding the Divine from redemption to love; from maintenance to transformation, from exclusion to inclusion." Like the early followers of Jesus we can acknowledge God in all things.

Disability resources

The second session 'Absence and Presence: What's the Picture?' was facilitated by Trish Murdoch (Education Officer, Disability Resource). Trish emphasised the need for us to challenge our prejudices and pre-conceived ideas and how to respond to disabled people.

Examination of our resources was recommended to see if our Centres were up to date with the theories of 'inclusion, together and equal' and lists were provided of the top 10 videos, books, journals, commercial movies and conference papers available.

Cinema connections

Another interesting session was provided by Madeleine Buckley from the Brisbane Catholic Education Multimedia Centre who presented a thought-provoking session 'How do we see? Being present through movies'.

The films *Yolngu Boy* and *Colour of Paradise* were used to encourage reflection on how the characters interpret their environments and how we relate to the story shown. Is there a connection in 'our story', the Christian narrative and the stories in the films? Was God present in these stories? Such questions we explored experiencing a range of emotions and thoughts.

Water, earth, fire and air

The conference continued with sessions on internet sites, and a wonderful experi-

ence at Ocean View where at 'Four Winds' we enjoyed 'Being present as part of the Earth'.

Sr Mary Tinney led us in a ritual in which we focused ourselves a part of the earth and connected with the elements of water, earth, fire and air. A reminder of our relationship and responsibility to the earth and all that flourished upon it.

The final day of the conference included visits to Inala where Ngutanaa-Lui, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Studies Centre is housed. There we were introduced to Aboriginal culture and spirituality, entered a Bora ring and viewed Aboriginal dancing.

The last session facilitated by Tim Keating, Executive Officer, Faith Education Services, was titled 'Jesus in Art: An insight into the Gospels'. Such images presented reflected the culture and theology of the people, showed different artists through different mediums and provided a panorama of different Jesus images portrayed through the eye of each individual artist.

In Conclusion

The Conference inspired and uplifted us spiritually, gave us much to ponder and take back to our own resource centres. New ideas, insight and various methodologies abounded as well as the human connection of getting to know each of our brothers and sisters better.

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