



Australian Association of Catholic Adult Faith Educators (AACAFE)

CONFERENCE REPORT - Passion for Adult Faith Formation

22nd Aug - 25th Aug 2010 Mary MacKillop Place, Mount Street, North Sydney

Thanks to the generosity of the parish, I was able to participate in three of the talks and offer the following insights:

The conference opened with prayer and an introduction that highlighted the document we had been given to read: the US Bishops document 'Our hearts were burning within us: A pastoral plan for Adult Faith Formation' (1999) - [www.nccbuscc.org/education/ourhearts](http://www.nccbuscc.org/education/ourhearts)  
We were encouraged to talk about faith formation where the RCIA/faith journey model was key. A powerful tool is sharing our stories (from the heart) not just education (from the head). There is wisdom in a group of members of a pilgrim Church. Some ideas of 'process theology' were also raised.

**Keynote talk on Sunday 5pm by Mons Tony Doherty**  
**"Searching to speak to an Adult Church – a story"**

We need contact between 'real life' and the words of the Gospel.  
What model of Church helps move people out to adulthood (not independence but interdependence)?  
The gospel is about betrayal – it's basically an adult book.  
The road to Emmaus story highlights that the dynamic of acceptance of the disciples (after they had betrayed Christ) was the moment of conversion. These are the moments we need to encourage when attempting faith formation.

**Part 1 of a 2 part talk on Monday morning by Rev Dr Richard Leonard**  
**'Healing broken hearts'**

'Card carrying' Catholics are a minority even in 'Catholic' organizations eg schools, hospitals. To put catechesis before evangelization is setting ourselves up for problems. The issue is COMPLEX but focusing on the verbs used by the US Bishops in the summary to this document is a guide to a way forward:

*Awaken, energise, strengthen, intensify, help, touch, transform, explore, experience, live, empower, know.*

If we try to expound God's message without addressing the issue of pain and suffering, then are setting ourselves up to fail. It's also important to use a language that people can understand. A good starting point is to acknowledge that relationships are hard. A bad starting point in the past was that of *self denial* (not the realization of MERCY)– self denial led to self doubt (not God). Faced with the hostility that this pre-Vatican II model often created, it can be helpful to **remember compassion.**

Between the 1970's & 90's, 'Adult Ed' became self fulfillment which led to 'me, me, me' (not God). Faced with the individualism that this created, it is helpful to **remember we are called as a people.** To talk about how to heal a broken heart, we need a new language.

NOTE: the problems of untidy language when praying. As we know from the Psalms, there are 9 classic postures of prayer, NOT JUST INTERCESSORY eg you can fruitfully lament a lack of rain/ or our carelessness with the water we have BUT we shouldn't just ask for rain as if God is an imperfect meteorologist!

***We should ask an unchanging God (James 1:17) to change us to change the world.***

## Keynote speech on Tuesday morning by Bishop David Walker 'On the road to Emmaus'

BBI fosters a truly Australian centre of spirituality and theology.

Focusing on 2 key verses in the road to Emmaus story (Luke 24:25-26) we see:

- A statement of Christian mystery
- Which even though it was foretold
- The disciples had not seen it
- \* Disciples did not recognize Jesus
- \* Eyes of faith are needed to see
- \* Faith formation is forming people to 'see'

Faith education is not just intellectual assent but a commitment of the whole person to the person of Jesus.

Catholic character is understanding, being committed to and acting out of our relationship to Jesus.

If you think about faith as an arch, prayer is the keystone but it also needs 'sides' ie the transformation of life.

It's what's in the heart that is the limit to effective communication. We need to imitate Christ.

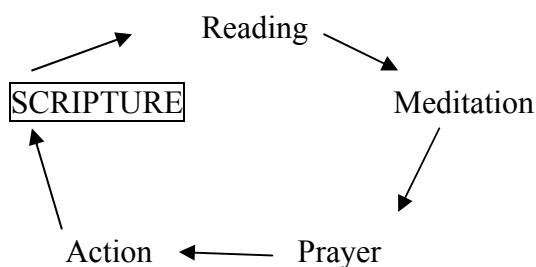
There are 2 main ways of interpreting Scripture 1 Historical Critical method 2. Theological method (which asks us to consider the unity of the Scriptures, the tradition of the Church and the analogy of faith) – BOTH ARE NEEDED.

Scientific study alone can mean the Bible might not lead to transformation of life.

This is where Lexio Divina comes in:

Reading without reflection is like eating without digesting.

Meditation is like a mirror that reflects one's life: it leads to us considering what we need to do (pray) to be more like what God wants for us (transformed). Prayer is when we seek the grace to activate what has come out of meditation.



The point is to have a heart illuminated by the Spirit

sacred heart ↔ sanctified heart

The mystery of Christ is at the centre of communion which is at the centre of mission.

WE NEED LEADERS BUT there are two key types of priests:

'personal' who build community and

'symbolic' who build communion (which in turn builds a sustainable community).

The Church is supposed to be a specific kind of community: a communion community.

We need reminders of the spiritual (the 'communion') not just the physical (the 'community').

It's an attitude of mind although we do need to be careful with the language of relationship.

Our relationship with Christ is different to other relationships: we 'put on' Christ, we are 'in' Christ.

*Suzanne Camilleri – Pastoral Associate OLD Catholic Parish of Chatswood*