

CCRW CONFERENCE, CARMARTHEN

AUGUST 21st -23rd 2015

Report to the NSC

The 2015 Conference was a most blessed and spirit-filled event. The Delegates' evaluations, from about a third of them, reflect how much the delegates thought of the week-end, how much they gained from it and how much they appreciated the various elements of the Conference - the Music, the Speakers, Rise Theatre, the Small Groups session and the Prayer Ministry evening. I know that it does not end there; that God will continue to bless the Delegates in many ways and that much fruit is still to come.

The team arrived in lashing rain on the Thursday afternoon. It was once again very helpful that we were in place before everyone arrived the following day. Fr. Matt Anscombe arrived at 10pm, complete with his cycle on the roof of his car! He was completely exhausted, having driven that day from Scotland where he had been on holiday. We plied him with cups of tea and something to eat before he headed off to bed.

On Friday morning, the team set about putting everything in place in the Cothi Conference Room, including the sound system and the alcove for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as blessing the campus, the rooms and the Conference Room itself. The team had a time of Prayer and Praise in the kitchen and Fr. Matt said Mass for our small number.

Registration started promptly at 1.30pm and ran very smoothly. Peter Kift and Sheila organised it very well and helped the delegates as they arrived with many different issues. They all arrived in the rain too! There were sixty-two Delegates, together with nine Day Visitors on the Saturday.

We were fortunate to have the teaching, wisdom and spirituality of two gifted speakers – Fr. Matt Anscombe and Ged Farrell. Fr. Matt gave the Conference a good start on the Friday evening with his wonderful exposé of the Good News. His second talk and his homily on the Saturday were no less powerful. He has a real gift for talking, with his outgoing personality, his energy, his humour and his creativity, as well as his genuine and evident spirituality. He could only be with us until Saturday lunch time but his presence with us for a short time was an important part of the week-end.

Fr. Matt and Ged Farrell had consulted with each other before the Conference to ensure that their talks were in tune with each other's and with the theme of the Conference. The theme, 'Proclaim the Good News!' was explored throughout the week-end. Fr. Matt explained what the Good News is and Ged followed by talking about all the ways in which we can share the Good News in our daily lives. Towards the end of his second talk on the Sunday morning, Ged was inspired to give everyone who wanted it, the Father's Blessing. Most delegates received this blessing. Husbands and wives went up together as did families. It was very powerful and must have sent away all who received it, with a warm feeling of being much loved. Ged is gifted in music and his participation in the Music Ministry enhanced the quality of the Prayer and Praise. He also led the Prayer Ministry evening and this turned out to be far more than was expected. It was held in the Anglican Chapel and many delegates have said how spiritually uplifting and fruitful the evening was. All the Prayer Ministers followed the New Dawn Guidelines and were co-ordinated by Sheila.

It was great to see Fr. Ambrose at the CCRW Conference once again and wonderful to see him looking so well. We are grateful for his generous contribution to the Conference. He attended all the events, lending an air of serenity and dignity at all times. He heard Confessions on the Prayer Ministry evening, said Mass on the Sunday, led us in renewing our Baptismal Vows and gave a very powerful sermon on the Real Presence in the Eucharist.

We were very blessed to have two Anglican Ministers with us, the Reverend Ainsley Griffiths, Chaplain at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and the Reverend Pat Phillips. Ainsley was really pleased to have the Conference at Carmarthen and to have us hold the Prayer Ministry evening in the Anglican Chapel, which was a wonderful venue for

such an evening. The Anglican Eucharist was a very special service and Ainsley preached on St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, one of the greatest theologians of the Church.

The RISE Theatre was a new addition this year and they certainly made an impression. They performed three sketches throughout the week-end. With bags of energy, they gave a short, very talented performance in just a few minutes, portraying themes that were immediately clear. In addition they led the whole assembly of delegates on the Saturday afternoon. The aim was to show us how to deliver a reading, biblical or other, with expression and in a visual way. Suffice it to say, that many of the delegates displayed hidden acting talents with a wide range of different voices and had us in fits of laughter. On the Saturday evening, they performed a sketch on how the Lord walks beside us in our lives. It was incredibly powerful and very evocative. It struck a chord with many of those present.

The music was a highlight of the week-end. The group of musicians led by Michael was totally united and presented as one. It is testament to all of their talents that that was possible. Mike had been communicating with each of the musicians in the months preceding the Conference and this proved effective in uniting them as a group. An innovation this year was to have music and singing in the ten minutes before each timetabled event began. This served to gather the delegates, settle them and send out the message that the next item was about to start. It created a wonderful, peaceful atmosphere which is what we had hoped. Thanks must go to all the musicians and singers, Mike, Ged, Bob, Max, Jane and Philippa for their playing and singing and to Clare Walsh for her beautiful singing and harmonising. Dave too, must be thanked for his constant attention to the projection of the words, something which required his focus all the time. Appreciation must be expressed in no small measure to Paul Williams who worked tirelessly on the sound system, ensuring that the microphones were working, adjusting the volume and recording the talks, sometimes at short notice and amidst no small challenges.

The College staff, both administrative and catering, were very co-operative in all we asked of them. The venue at Carmarthen continues to be ideal for such a Conference.

I would like to express my particular and personal thanks to the Planning Team members, Fran, Pat and Sheila for all their efforts and hard work, their commitment to the Conference and their prayers. It has once again been a privilege and an honour to lead the Planning Team and I thank the team members for their support to me throughout the last year.

All praise and thanksgiving be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the countless blessings received during the Conference and still being received! To Him be all the glory!

Madeleine Walters
Chair of the Conference Planning Team 2015