

Greetings from Bundaberg!

Travelling with Fr Laurence Freeman for a week during the month of February, 2010, was one of the highlights of my life.

It was the occasion of "THE BISHOP'S INSERVICE DAYS" in the Diocese of Rockhampton. Our Bishop, Fr Brian Heenan, takes time out each year to visit different areas of the large diocese to spend a day with the staff of all Catholic schools, the catechists who teach religious education in State schools, adult educators, Centacare staff, Youth, members of religious congregations, Catholic parishioners, members of other Churches, and members of the local Christian meditation groups.

This year was special. Bishop Brian had invited Fr Laurence Freeman to be the Keynote Speaker on each day, as well as to present a workshop on Christian Meditation, as one of a variety of workshops available to participants each afternoon.

Following a prayer ritual which focussed on The Year of the Priest, a welcome from the Director of Catholic Education, Miss Leesa Jeffcoat, and an address from the Bishop, it was Fr Laurence's turn to address the audience. Audiences varied in size according to the region, with approximately 1000 people in each of the Rockhampton and Mackay regions, 400 in each of Gladstone and Bundaberg, and 300 in the Emerald region, with people travelling from Barcaldine, Blackall, Clermont and Springsure. Because of distance, people in Longreach received a live broadcast of Fr Laurence's address in Rockhampton.

The theme of each day was "Taking Time...", and Fr Laurence encouraged his audiences to take time each day for prayer, especially Christian Meditation, so that prayer becomes grounded in our daily lives. He advocated the value of teaching Christian Meditation to children, and referred to the daily practice of meditation undertaken in many Catholic schools across Australia. Many principals and teachers left each day with the intention of introducing daily Christian meditation into their classrooms. The parables of Jesus, and His teaching on prayer, were brought to life by Fr Laurence as a sound basis for our Christian meditation.

One aspect of his presentation that has remained with me, was Fr. Laurence's description of "The catholic mind" as "The mind of Christ". A mind which is all inclusive, open to all, without division or discrimination, where all are equal and loved by God, and no barriers are created. People in the audience, from many different walks of life, felt very much at home.

While the majority of participants had no prior knowledge of Fr Laurence, evaluation comments included:

- . Fr. Laurence Freeman was inspiring;
- . Meditation workshops were really interesting;
- . Fr Laurence excellent!!
- . Loved the meditation presentation;
- . The practical experience of meditation was very worthwhile;
- . Loved the guest speaker- what wonderful knowledge;
- .Fr Laurence was inspiring, first with the Biblical introduction, and then with the actual meditation;
- .Guest speaker was thought-provoking;
- .A worthwhile experience to listen to Fr Laurence and to have time to practice the art of meditation.

Joe McCorley