

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

We go forward from here with hope and the joy of the Gospel

'Mission: one heart many voices' 2019 concluded this afternoon with a challenge to participants to consider what the Church beyond 2020 must look like.

In a busy conference program packed with over 50 masterclasses, workshops, keynotes and facilitated discussions covering a broad range of issues, the morning of the final day presented a stark change of pace.

The day began with a sombre prayer of lament, healing and hope, mindful of those hurting because of the Church's failings, including Indigenous Australians and children and families affected by institutional sexual abuse.

The session was one of many powerful moments experienced in the conference, much like the raw courage of the previous afternoon, which featured a performance from the Treehouse Theatre group, consisting of student refugees from the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Dr Carol Zinn ssj, who opened the conference on Monday with a keynote on living and leading mission, fittingly sent participants on their way with a strong message of encouragement.

'Beyond 2020 we need to be a people of God, a welcoming people,' she said, echoing the theme of inclusion that has been a major feature of this year's conference.

Dr Zinn issued a tough challenge during the final conversation, in which Edmund Rice Centre Director and Refugee Council of Australia President Phil Glendenning and Charlene Robson, an education officer in faith and care from Wagga Wagga, also spoke.

'As Charlene said, as a Church, we are going to have to sound like a two-year-old, asking "why? Why? Why?"' Dr Zinn said. 'Beyond 2020 I hope the Church's answer is no longer "because I said so".'

The words that came out in the final discussion of the conference rang true on a day which included sessions on Christian-Muslim relations, welcoming and including LGBTI people in the Church, and the progress of the Plenary Council 2020.

'Inclusivity, dialogue and encounter need to become a way of life,' said Dr Zinn. 'They are the Church in the future.'

'What does it mean to be male, female and everything on that fluid spectrum in between? I hope the Church beyond 2020 is having that conversation.'

Speaking on behalf of Catholic Religious Australia, Sr Stancea Vichie mss summed up the spirit of the conference. 'We go forward from here with hope and the joy of the Gospel!'

For more information, photos and video of the conference, stay tuned to www.mohmv.com.au.

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