

Bernadette and the Ramp

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It is the experience of Emmanuel Centre that when it comes to access, the most important ingredient is the will to provide it. A typical example is when the Archdiocese of Perth wanted to commemorate the death of Pope John Paul II with Eucharist in Saint Mary's Cathedral in the city centre of Perth. The liturgical planners for this event wanted to involve people of the Archdiocese who had actually met the Pope during his lifetime.

Bernadette Jolly, who uses a wheelchair, and her husband, Bob, were two of three representatives of Australia to attend the World Day for People with Disabilities in December of 2001. There, Bernadette and Bob met with the Pope and presented him with the Proceedings of the Inclusion Conference of 1999 that had been held in Perth. At the Perth commemoration for the death of Pope John Paul II, Bernadette was invited to do one of the readings in the Mass. These readings were to be read from the Cathedral sanctuary. The challenge was how to get Bernadette from floor level up the 15 steps to the sanctuary level.

Emmanuel Centre's first option was to ask the people who are professional ramp makers and installers to construct a ramp to the sanctuary. One look at the situation and all declined, because it would be too difficult. However, with some lateral thinking and a few bricks together with some heavy display boards and carpet rejects, a ramp was installed in the priests' sacristy, which not only allowed for Bernadette to safely rise to the occasion, but also allowed the priests to more easily get to the sanctuary level.

The pictures attached give an idea of the construction.





