

# Report on Women: Gathering, Affirming, Celebrating

26-28 August 2009

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I attended this Conference as a participant from the Sale Diocese. We gathered with women from dioceses throughout Australia in Canberra for the conference to recognize the tenth anniversary of the report into the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia, *Woman and Man - One in Christ Jesus*.

The conference began with a reception at the Archbishop's House, where Archbishop Coleridge spoke of the charismatic leadership women offer to the Church today. Margaret Malone SGS and Sonya Wager SGS, two of the authors of the original report, spoke briefly about significant aspects of the report they recalled.

The conference was then officially opened on Thursday morning by Patricia Banister, Chair of the Council for Australian Catholic Women. Patricia spoke of the hope of using the two days to reflect on the response given to the decisions made in the Australian Bishops 2000 Social Justice Statement.

Tricia Walsh facilitated the conference and managed to engage all participants in sharing ideas, hopes and dreams in making a way forward. Sonya Wagner SGS offered a retrospective of the report *Woman and Man - One in Christ Jesus*. She reminded participants of the significant aspects of the report and challenged those gathered to read the signs of the times in responding into the future.

Excellent workshops were run, including: Women in Scripture by Dr Mary Coloe pvbm; Practicing Christian Mediation by Dr Sarah Bachelard; Indigenous Women in Leadership by Dr Nereda White; Real Women by Kerry Bush; and Dealing with Trauma and Recovery by Carmel Ross. I enjoyed Nereda White and Carmel Ross' workshops.

Delegates were entertained at the conference dinner with an uplifting performance by Rebecca Gorman. Rebecca shared her faith journey through songs, story, music and karaoke. A highlight of the conference was meeting Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce at Government House for morning tea.



As part of the conference the National Photographic Exhibition of Inspirational Australian Catholic Women was launched by Geraldine Hawkes. This exhibition gives the opportunity to stop, look and notice women, who have done extraordinary things in the community and Church.

Sincere thanks to Reverend Father Peter Slater and the diocesan pastoral council for giving me the opportunity to attend such a wonderful conference. It was an inclusive event and I would like to thank Patricia and Glenn Mowbray for making sure that access for my wheelchair was provided.

