

BEYOND THE YEAR OF MERCY

On a recent rainy Sunday afternoon, over thirty people gathered in the small hall with Sr Veronica Lawson rsm to reflect on the theme of *Beyond the Year of Mercy*. Veronica began by drawing our attention to *The Australia We Want*, a report from the Community Council for Australia which asks all Australians to accept the challenge of creating an Australia which lives the values of justice, inclusiveness, courage, optimism and compassion. The report highlights disturbing statistics which show that incarceration rates are rising, suicide rates are higher than they have ever been, inequality in income distribution is greater than most other OECD countries and we are a less generous people than in the past.



Our exploration then moved to a consideration of Pope Francis' declaration of an eighth Work of Mercy: Caring for our common home, the planet and all its inhabitants which calls us to "grateful contemplation of God's world" and all that our earth encompasses. For more information see [here](#).

We were also introduced to *The Earth Bible Commentary* by Norm Habel which provides perspectives on the earth story in a selection of books from the Bible. This led us to an invitation to frame our own readings through the prism of *Habitat, Habitants and Holy* which Veronica drew from Elaine Wainwright RSM's concept of *Habitat, Human and Holy*.

Building on this rich input, we then moved to a reading of the day's gospel (Luke 19:1-10) which tells the story of Zacchaeus and his determination to see Jesus who was entering the town of Jericho. Despite Zacchaeus' scorned status as a tax collector and his acknowledged sinfulness, Jesus chooses to stay at his house knowing that Zacchaeus has already changed his ways and has made restitution for his wrongdoing.



With Veronica's guidance, we deepened our understanding of the language of the reading and considered how we could better honour the *Habitat, Habitants and Holy* in our lives. One of the participants, Andrea, commented that

the afternoon had helped her consider how to better integrate her faith into her everyday life and to never stop “hungering and seeking”. Andrea experienced the workshop as “food for the soul on our journey to know God”. Another participant, Pauline, felt that the session had helped to bring the Gospel closer and provided an understanding that “God is ahead”. Many of the participants, including Barry, enjoyed the inclusiveness that was fostered throughout the afternoon.

The afternoon ended on a light note with Dermot Dorgan’s *Cockroach Rap* telling us that “Francis of Assisi would have called us his brothers”. Check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2Ei6TU9qJM>

Bernadette Brouwers