

Equipping each other for Christian Witness in a Multi-cultural and Multi-faith World



I am privileged and honored in being a part of the Ecumenical Continuing Formation at Bossey. The ECF was conducted from Aug 6, 2019 to Aug 15, 2019. It was an enriching program for my life. The insights I have gained were enormous. The learning experience made me look at my own perspectives of faith in a positively different and multi-dimensional ways.

The amazing theme was that our everyday schedule started with a wonderful morning prayer at the medieval chapel at the Ecumenical institute, followed by sessions and discussions at the plenary. **We were a group of 14 members arriving from different countries** (India-4, Greece-2, USA-2, Brazil-1, Italy-1, Mexico-1, Nigeria-1, Australia-1, Trinidad-1) On our first day we were asked to introduce about ourselves and share our faith stories with other members of the group and we had some games to get to know each other's names and interests well. The introductory games made us develop very good rapport within a short period of time and made each of us to be respectfully comfortable and friendly with others. We were asked to write down our hopes, fears, questions I had in mind, what I bring to the seminar which made us realize

the fact that we are all open to learn, to embrace each other in being a Christian witness which is an ongoing process in life which involves a lot of receiving and giving.

On the second day Prof. Wesley Ariarajah addressed us about **sharing faith in a multi-cultural and multi-faith world. The keynotes were about Evangelism, Mission and Witness.** What is a mission and how are we understanding Lord's mission. It made us think and we focused on matters which were not put on the table should be brought to discussion, the mission work done so far are lacking something and it made us realize that we should work organic and right. And, to respect other faith and religion even when not accepting it.

On the third day we had Fr. Lawrence Iwuamadi presenting on **Reading the Bible in a Multi-faith and Multi-cultural context.** It made me understand on how am reading the Bible and interpreting it and how it varies to people of other faith denominations and cultural aspects. This helped me to understand to study Bible in its own context to understand widely and acknowledge the truth in it, **to be extremely inclusive instead of being exclusive.**

On Friday, we had a visit to the Taize Community at France, where we saw thousands of youth involved in community activities at the Taize, listening to the Word of God at the Bible Study and attending the prayers at the prayer hall. The Brothers there were extremely friendly, answered our questions and helped us understand the **mission work and about reconciliation** of each person at their personal lives. I also happened to meet a Brother who was natively from my city, I was thrilled and happy to meet him. We have planned to meet when he comes to India in October to plan out for

some ecumenical work in our area. It was an enlightening experience at Taize and I felt the presence of God filled during the prayers.

On Saturday we had an interactive session with Mikie Roberts who discussed about **celebrating together**. His session let me understand that singing and praying unites us together and it is not so difficult **to sing, pray and breathe together**. The fact emphasizes that when a small group of people of different faith communities can sing and pray and breathe together, it is also possible in a large group and with different faiths. It all depends on how we see and embrace each other in God's love to be One. **Everyone should have a starting point to be able to follow the tune.**

We attended an Evangelical Lutheran Church on Sunday and visited the Geneva museum of Reformation, Cathedral, Reformation wall and other places. It was interesting to learn new information.

On Monday with fresh minds we listened to Rev. Nathan Day Wilson speak to us about the **challenges of religious pluralism** and how we can overcome the challenges like fear, selfish acts in name of being Christian, boasting, unfriendly talks, opening to inter faith dialogues. **'Saying YES to a stranger sometimes means saying NO to harm a stranger'**. We discussed then, the article about the recommendations for Conduct, (A publication of WCC, PCID, WEA).

We were also taken to the WCC office at Geneva where we had presentations and discussions about water crisis and works of WCC, Gender Issues and Feminism and the works of World Lutheran federation to tackle and educate the people and women about the rights and art of living.

On the 14th we had a speech by Prof. Benjamin Simon, who spoke to us the **mission is not about conversion but about Translation, Transmission and Transformation- the three T's**. we also discussed about the aspects and facts from the article Together Towards Life, as a practical guide made me understand the God's mission and is hopefully going to help in my upcoming days.

In all these discussions and throughout the program Dr. Martin Robra, our course Instructor, guided us and gave us lots of additional inputs and looked through it that each one of us get the point at which the discussion was going on. **A special thanks to him.**

We had a closing prayer ceremony and bid farewell to each other.

Though I may have skipped a lot of points to be added in this report, I can assure you that I have learnt a lot more and gained more nurturing insights from this ecumenical study than I ever expected to learn in my life and am grateful for this opportunity.

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