

Young Men Walking Mindfully on the Earth

It is so important for humans, whether secondary school students, adults or toddlers, to have opportunities to be deeply connected to the sacred earth where we encounter everything that sustains us and all living species. I know one young mother who plans every day for her two-year-old to have as much time as possible outdoors ... sniffing the wind, smelling the flowers, fingering the leaves, running up small hills, cultivating the inner-city community garden, and relishing the gifts of life. It is a principle of all good education that reflection on lived experiences enriches what we used to call 'bookish' learning and is now so often 'digital', or 'virtual' rather than 'first-hand' learning. 'Fresh is best, naturally' as they say!

In the weeks leading up to Easter, a group of boys from Riverview College in Sydney made a city-based pilgrimage/walk through parts of inner Sydney. They camped out on Cockatoo Island, taking time apart from social media to be affected first hand by the beauty of the Harbour and the closeness of the earth on which the city is built. The boys spent time reflecting on the tracks and roads built over the original soil and the effect our lifestyle is having on earth's eco-systems. They were invited to process their responses through journaling and sharing with each other. They watched the movie, *I'll Push You*, linking their own journey across the stunningly beautiful Sydney landscape with the Camino pilgrimage, the life-changing journey so many pilgrims have made for hundreds of years across the villages and fields of Spain and France, and continue to make in increasing numbers each year.

Sue Martin is the Sustainability Centre Co-Ordinator for Riverview College in Sydney, responsible for carrying out the Sustainable Environment Management Plan (SEMP) for the College. Sue is also a member of the Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA) Reference Group. CEA was founded by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in 2001 to work towards what Pope John Paul II called 'ecological conversion', that is, a change of heart, a newness of mind, in understanding and respecting the earth as God's Creation and the source of all life.

In the years since 2001, CEA has worked tirelessly with schools, parishes and dioceses, linking with global and local environmental agencies, informed and energised by sound science and first-class theology. South Australian, Fr Denis Edwards, was one of the original members of the CEA Reference Group. Denis walked the Flinders Ranges, wrote, lectured and lived out of his love for God's Creation, becoming an internationally recognised authority in eco-theology. He is now experiencing the fullness of life with his Creator God.

The expertise and hands-on realism of educators like Sue Martin is always needed in the Church and in organisations like Catholic Earthcare Australia. They help keep our focus on the young people whose future is threatened by human neglect of our earth home. Later this year Sue and other NSW Catholic educators will plan a major gathering of young people to explore and celebrate the wonder of creation and our human responsibility to care for the earth and live more sustainably. The work of theologians like Denis Edwards opens up for us the tradition of respect and love for the created world that has been handed down

through faith and culture: for example, through the Psalms and other sacred writings, through the integral relationship faith and science have in understanding the Cosmic Story of evolution, through the life of St Francis of Assisi teaching us tenderness for all creatures, and through the 2015 gift to the world of Pope Francis' great ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

Among the highlights the Riverview boys recalled on their pilgrimage were their visits to Churches and discovery of parts of Sydney they had never known existed. Sue explained that a particular high point was the chance to eat at the *Two Wolves* Mexican café in Broadway. No doubt they were as hungry as a pack of wolves after their walking and wandering!

As the website explains 'Two Wolves' is a work of the Jesuits, staffed by young volunteers (including Riverview 'old boys'), a vibrant 'cantina', offering Mexican food and a meeting place in inner-city Sydney's Chippendale, that:

'welcomes all who walk through the doors to experience our food and warm atmosphere.

With a vibrant young team of volunteers united by a common desire to serve others and a simple street food menu that comes from our network of friends around the world, we offer an eclectic and inspiring experience.

Colourful, quirky and full of heart, we are a social hub for young people to enjoy good food, find community and share meaning.' (Found at 'Two Wolves' website)

No doubt Pope Francis would be proud of the way good simple food and warm hospitality welcome all comers to the cantina, providing a place of nourishment that models a world characterised by love, moderation, service, joy and inclusion.

Well done Sue for sharing this off-the-beaten-track experience. We look forward to working with you and others who also have your passion for the earth through Catholic Earthcare Australia in 2019 and beyond. (Trish Hindmarsh, Easter Saturday, 2019)