

Keynote 3: Serving the Poor with an Open Heart - Roby Curtis

Opening with prayer and praise Robbie, from the Emanuel Community, comes across as a very charismatic and energetic speaker, and introduces himself and talks about his faith as one of relationship with one another and Jesus Christ. This theme of relationship continues when he tells of how his mother was instrumental in his ministry. From a young age, Robbie's mother would share family meals with the homeless and even those with mental health issues. These early life experiences are evident in the three main focuses of Emanuel Community where Robbie is Co-ordinator. These focuses are: Homeless, Indigenous, Prolife and these are also great passions of their ministry and it comes across in Robbie when he talks about them.

Blind Eye Ministries is another group Robbie is involved with and is a grass root Catholic ministry devoted to journeying with the most vulnerable in our society. Using a lot of first hand real life experience from his ministry, which he showed videos of, he showed the effectiveness of his ministry through the testimonies of people who have been in prison and come out. The work done through these ministries are all extremely powerful, beautiful and necessary. Robbie mentions that it is not easy, sometimes scary, uncomfortable, and maybe even dangerous but the fruit that comes from it is phenomenal. The Power of relationship, invitation, love that God has given us.

Robbie then went on through a few slides talking about call, our call to service (Matt 9:35) and to the poor (Matt 25:40) and how these things are part of our baptismal response to life and how they are a foundational part of our faith, not optional extras. Carrying on in his slide Robbie points out that today we are blessed with some very potent witnesses of the faith through people like Mother Teresa and Pope Francis, however we must not all forget where they get their inspiration, Jesus Christ. The three people mentioned scream the gospel in their ministry, where they don't just sit comfortably in their churches are "Urban Missionaries" being with the people where they are at in their day-to-day lives.

Then Robbie goes on to talk about the Church and the poor asking who are they, Can we see them, and what does this have to do with the Church? Starting with the latter, this has everything to do with the Church, we are the "hospital for the sick", a place for the destitute and abandoned. We are the Universal loving Family, who engage with the poor people, it is the essence of the Church family that accepts all. We can see poverty manifest more physically in the west however this physical poverty speaks into spiritual and mental poverty, but the real challenge is in how we react. Do we act like the high priest, of Levite in the good Samaritan story? Or are we acting like Jesus and entering into the mess with these people? This then leads us into the end of Robbie's Keynote, talking about missionary disciples; he tells us that our faith is an active thing. In James 2 we are told that faith and deeds is a never-ending journey of growth, which is a point that real comes across not only in this Keynote speech, but throughout Robbie's ministry. To end he asks the question, "What does this all mean?" Guaranteed ministry of inconvenience.

Contributed by Dominic Malgeri