

Workshop 4A Taking Faith to the Edges of Society – Roby Curtis

Where are the edges of your society? Who are you being called to serve?



In his workshop Taking Faith to the Edges of Society, Roby Curtis invites us to serve the less fortunate by reaching them on a personal level, building relationships with them, and inviting Christ into their lives.

Roby Curtis is an Australian father of four from Brisbane whose deep passion for faith, family, and justice is displayed in his service with Blind Eye Ministries, reaching out to the poor and encouraging partnership between the Church, community, and other ministries and organisations. His vision is to see young people in the Catholic Church rise up as living witnesses not only in speech, but in action.

Starting with worship, Roby led us into a prayer for passion to serve the poor, the needy, and those on the edges of our society. In his work with Blind Eye Ministries, the focus areas he identified in his work are the homeless, indigenous, and pro-life, although these are just some of the issues in Brisbane as no one person or ministry can address every issue, but identifying the problems in our own society will show us where we are being called.

Where are the edges of your society?

There are approximately 150 homeless people within a 3km radius of the Skytower at any one time, and often they are just ignored by people walking by. As Disciples of Christ, we are called to serve those in need beyond mere donations, but building relationships with them and giving them an opportunity to share their story so you can find the deeper issue that is keeping them in their situation and offer them a way out, such as drug rehabilitation, counselling, and other forms of help depending on their situation, and even more, a fresh start. (He encourages being very careful and doing this in public places with a group to reduce the risk).

Where is there social injustice?

Issues such as abortion that are highly prevalent in New Zealand need to be addressed and our belief as Catholics in support of pro-life, for example, needs to be acted on. Using this as an example, Roby encourages not only taking a political stand against abortion, but providing young mothers with support and alternative pathways with organisations such as Family Life International NZ. He advises that we should be less focused on acting against the issue, and more focused on supporting the alternative, revealing the truth in a less confrontational way by providing guidance and assistance, thus showing love to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need to remember that it is our responsibility to act on our faith and not wait for the government to do something about poverty and injustice in our country. We need to get out of our comfort zone and serve the ones that Christ Himself associated with, the poor, the sick, and the “unclean”. However, practical needs are not the only part of our mission, although important, and the spiritual hunger needs to be satisfied in order to provide a permanent solution. This is where, in

our mission as Christians, we are called to share our faith, helping others find Christ in their lives and form a relationship with Him so they can move forward in their lives, and this includes welcoming everyone into our churches.

Our mission is not an easy one and the journey may not be as straight as you think, it gets messy. It can be very hard for people who have become accustomed to a certain way of living to break out of old habits, stealing, relapse and breaching of parole can happen, but we still need to be willing to help them get back on track and make a fresh start. We need to build up our relationships with them, give them a chance to improve themselves, be there for them and establish consistency, trust, and transparency in order to lead and encourage them to the faith.

Our faith is not merely based on what we know and even just what we say, but what we do with what we believe. Jesus was someone who lived out servant-leadership, committing himself to serve and bring faith to the far reaches of society and, as his disciples, we are called to carry on his mission. We need to see where the edges of our society are so that we can identify the need and fulfill it, bringing Christ's love to others through our service and our actions.

By Gino Pimentel