

Praying across faiths

[<http://www.express.org.au/article.aspx?aeid=22880>, 18 Aug 2010]

An interfaith retreat at Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality in Melbourne has given young Christians and Muslims the chance to learn about each other's faiths.

Nine young people came together on 6 and 7 August for an experience in inter-religious dialogue facilitated by Fr Herman Roborgh SJ.



The prayer sessions consisted of *lectio divina*, or meditation on selected passages from the Bible and the Qur'an. It also involved sharing about each one's experience of praying with the text of the other religion. Questions regarding each others' faith were also encouraged in an honest and respectful dialogue. The retreat finished with the MAGiS circle which is a modified and extended Examen, done in prayerful conversation.

The retreat was organized by Madeleine Marson of MAGiS Victoria and Kieran Gill, SJ of Jesuit Theological College. The attendees included two Muslim women from the Al Ghazzali Centre, a student from Newman College, a young lawyer and three Jesuit scholastics.

Feriyal Glaidous, a young Muslim, said she was moved by how much respect the Christians had for the Muslims in greetings, prayer and food arrangements. A former student at a Catholic school, she said the experience of the retreat gave her confidence to engage in more interfaith dialogue with her Christian friends.

'Now I will be able to be more open about interfaith discussions with them', she said.

Satya Nandlal, a Catholic who grew up in an extended family with both Catholic and Hindu members, said she had always felt a natural curiosity for interfaith experiences.

'It was wonderful to be able to meet with young Muslim women, as I haven't had many conversations with Muslim women before', she said.

'I found their readiness to explain their cultural beliefs and identity to me very generous. [It] gave me a newfound respect for our Muslim brothers and sisters.'

Both young women said the retreat helped them better understand God, and discover God's presence in each other's faith.

'The retreat brought peace to my heart that God is in all people and in all created things and we can share as equals a sense of our love, reverence and awe for God,' said Satya.

MAGiS hopes to work collaboratively in future efforts at having a dialogue and sharing that would encourage more young Muslims and Christians to encounter 'the other'. Another retreat of this kind is being planned for next year.

By Nico Lariosa SJ