

Review of Pilgrimage 2012

The following dimensions were identified by the group as areas of enrichment derived from the 2012 Presentation Pilgrimage and thus provided a framework for our Review.

1. Presentation Charism

- It is a very valuable opportunity for Leadership Team members to walk in the footsteps of Nano. The North Presentation and South Presentation Convent experiences in Cork were a highlight. Hearing the story told first hand by Sr. Carmel and Sr. Rosario enabled us to envisage the time and place and therefore the sheer enormity of Nano's mission and contribution to the poor of Cork.
- The relational aspect of time spent with the Sisters 'at table' in the South Pres. North Pres. Fermoy, Castle Island, Kildare, Georges Hill and Lucan convents developed a sense of fellowship between us and enhanced our understanding of how the Presentation sisters have interpreted Nano's legacy in a contemporary context. The hospitality was amazing – scones, cakes, tarts etc but it was the conversation that flowed freely and warmly that really made this aspect such a highly successful element of the pilgrimage.
- Founding house visits are an essential element of the pilgrimage for each of our schools. We don't see a need to visit a founding house where there is no school involved. The two Oaks planted at Kildare before the Sisters set off to Australia was a very powerful symbol of the sacrifice made and the legacy we owe.

2. The spiritual dimension

- Ballygriffin – The Cosmic Walk was excellent and the moral imperative evident in the work at Ballygriffin was very satisfying. It was evidence of the regeneration and contemporary re-imagination of Nano's vision, "What is the need?"
- The second day visiting the surrounding sites of Nano's childhood was full, but very connected. Mass Rock was a moving spiritual experience as the power of water drowned the liturgy. The physical reality of what Nano did was very apparent.
- Glendalough was magnificent. The natural beauty encouraged reflection and spiritual renewal. The group did a long walk together where we talked with ease and thoughtfulness about our lives and our work. Michael Rogers reflective walk and the Mass in the ruins of the St Kevin's monastery and St. Mary's/Church of Women was simply outstanding and a precious experience. He is a deeply affecting man who communicates the spiritual dimension in a very human and accessible manner. Perhaps a second day at Glendalough could be considered. It was wonderful to be in the mountains away from cities and was a great counterpoint to the bustle of the city experiences.
- Sr Maria Lazzaro's spiritual leadership was outstanding especially the greeting of the Sisters at the convents and her insistence on the human

dimension in managing the group. The Journal and various reflections prepared by Maria were very good, especially Mass Rock.

3. The educational dimension

- School visits were enlightening. It gave us a contemporary view of Nano and how the Presentation charism might be kept alive in the future in Australia. It also was a great opportunity to 'talk shop' and compare notes with fellow travellers. We would highly recommend this element be retained.
- The implications of the meltdown of the Irish economy in recent years were a sobering reminder of the continuing sacrifice that the Irish have made and the unwitting benefactors that Australia has become.
- The CEIST visit with Anne Kelleher was illuminating. Anne again saw a positive, asserting that the harsh economic conditions combined with the transition to lay leadership Catholic Schools had, "refocused the educational enterprise of a faith school." She believes it is imperative "to see over the parapet when things are rough."

4. Collegial Experience

- As travelling companions we put faith and trust in a journey that we were quite unsure of to start.
- Living in community provided an opportunity for personal growth through sharing the 'dailyness' of life.
- The sharing of our experiences and ideas on Teaching and Learning and Staff Professional Learning was invaluable.
- We had many conversations around how we interpret the Presentation spirit and vision.
- The question kept arising "What is our moral purpose if Nano's was to educate the poor?" What is the need? This is the topic we thought we might explore at the Presentation Conference in Hobart in 2013.
- Pastoral Leaders could perhaps go next.

5. Cultural experience

- The remnants of the Celtic Tiger's collapse were visible everywhere as parents regaled stories of their children departing Ireland to find work in Australia. However the optimism and resilience in the face of this 'second famine' was remarkably Irish. Tragedy becomes them. The aftermath of the Celtic Tiger economy was a sobering reminder of the continuing sacrifice that the Irish have made and the debt we owe them as benefactors in Australia.
- The food and hospitality was overwhelming in its largesse.
- The friendly and welcoming hospitality including their excellent road etiquette.

Overall the experience exceeded expectations for all of us. We are indebted to the Presentation Sisters and our Principals who sent us. It is with deep gratitude we highly recommend this pilgrimage and enrichment experience.

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