

26th Annual Conference

'God's merciful love endures for ever' (Psalm 136)



St Augustine of Hippo in *Confessions* exhorts each and every one of us to be of one heart and one mind intent on God. The 26th CISC Conference at The Holiday Inn, Stratford-upon-Avon, should serve to reassure us that considerable positive resolve exists amongst leaders of Catholic independent schools to enshrine those values which might enable our communities to respond to, and share in, St Augustine's restlessness to be united in our mission to make our schools privileged places in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs.

During my first conference in 2013 at the Nottingham Belfry Hotel, John Shinkwin suggested to me that a CISC conference should be an oasis for heads, providing them with an opportunity to relax, to reflect, to share, to be supported, to be challenged, to be inspired and... to have fun!



Sr Gemma's opening address challenged us from the outset. Our schools, if they are to be evangelising communities, must move from humiliation to humility; from conformity to conscience; from exclusion to encounter; from power to authority; from isolation to community; from strength to vulnerability, and from secret to mystery. Her advice, delivered as ever with good humour, was compassionate and reassuring. Corporal and spiritual works of mercy have very practical implications for our schools which, appropriately fostered, they will assist us to counteract many of the dangerous values which modern society promotes. Genuine love in our schools will help to combat the pain of loneliness and abandonment felt by so many young people these days and, while we can only ever count the victims that are known to us, we can never know how many are being saved because of the day-to-day living out of the Gospel values.



Other workshops were available but Ann Memmott's workshop which addressed the needs of learners with autism in our schools was very effective in enhancing awareness of the typical barriers associated with the condition and introduced simple strategies which can be employed to help our pupils with autism negotiate

negotiate these barriers and become more effective learners. Indeed, the exercise involving the reliance on words alone, and the subsequent difficulties of understanding and interaction arising from the absence of other cues, could be easily and successfully incorporated in future INSET sessions within our schools. Ann's workshop provided much food for thought and was, if anything, too brief!



Antony Hudson's workshop shared his experience of prayer life within his school and the benefits of creating opportunities for pupils and staff to reflect on the profound interiority of their own faith through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, complemented by traditional and modern sacred music and inspirational art. Antony's workshop merged seamlessly into a valuable opportunity to get lost in our own thoughts, allowing faith to provide a supplement for the limitations of our senses.



We could only attend two workshops but I heard that in the Laudato Si workshop, Ellen Teague and Sr Louisa Poole gave a very helpful summary of Pope Francis' encyclical and provided valuable resources for use in schools. The Stone King Kingston Smith workshop provided the usual very professional insight into a range of legal and safeguarding issues.

A wide range of resources from the conference, including Fr Alan Whelan's beautifully illustrated morning prayers, can be downloaded by clicking on the conference in Calendar on the CISC website and there is a short video, which captures the spirit of the conference, in the About section.



Pre and post dinner drinks provided a much valued and gratefully received opportunity to reacquaint with friends and erstwhile colleagues in agreeable surroundings and to rest, recuperate and benefit from the restorative effects of collegiality and fellowship. Around 200 of us sat down to dinner, an indulgence in fine dining with stimulating and congenial company. Speeches, as such, were mercifully brief with entirely apposite recognition and thanks being given to those that have served the sector and the conference for many productive and memorable years. A fine end to a fine day and so... to bed.





Raymond Friel's speech, on the second morning, reminded us that as leaders of Catholic schools, teachers and as parents, we've been blessed with a great privilege and the associated burden of responsibility – which we are not called to bear alone. Raymond eloquently expressed his belief that there is no doubt that people are being changed in every school in the world, every day of the week, for better or for worse, most of the time without even realising it. In every school, there is some ethos at play, as a result of which colleagues, pupils and parents are constantly influencing each other by the way in which they interact with each other. We can be reassured that whatever pupils learn in terms of a subject syllabus, they learn much more from the way in which it is taught. How our colleagues relate to pupils in the classroom, the corridors, the theatre, Chapel, out on the pitches, and so on, has a much more lasting effect than the content of a specification. We were reminded that ethos is never neutral; pupils are being influenced for good or for ill every time they come into contact with a teacher within a school and a school is a Catholic school if it is run by individuals and teams who are inspired by the Gospel, who have been formed in Christian pedagogy, and not by people who are prone to being seduced by fashionability.

With thanks to Melanie Squires & Tracey Russell (Gillman & Soame) for the photographs and to McCrimmons for the Year of Mercy banner and conference presentation slide



Crackley Hall pupils who, with Princethorpe College, sang beautifully at the Conference Mass

The conference culminated and was concluded with the celebration of Mass, led by Bishop Tom Williams, where delegates, who may, like myself, be guilty of occasionally taking this special gift for granted, enjoyed a renewed appreciation of the Grace that saves, forgives and unites everyone to the Father, Church, and each other.

So, all things considered, I am delighted to report that the 26th CISC Conference was fit for purpose and all will have benefitted physically, emotionally, professionally and spiritually from the occasion. It achieved all those things that John Shinkwin intensioned and remains more relevant and valuable now than it has ever been, in the year that John commends the stewardship of our organisation into the hands of Raymond Friel.

Matthew Harris
(Headmaster of Austin Friars School, Carlisle)



Chair Elect, Antonia Beary, thanks Chris Cleugh for his service as Chair



You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You. Saint Augustine

New CISC School

Holy Mary Catholic School, Madrid

Holy Mary can lay claim to be the only British Catholic school in not just Madrid but the whole of Spain! It is a small school of 350+ in the heart of Madrid and while most children are Spanish, the parents are very committed to having their children schooled with Catholic values and with a British curriculum. The school is expanding and will, in 2016, enter its first cohort onto the iGCSE programme.



Headmaster Stephen Shields with some students

Catholic Young Writer Award 2016

An Ampleforth student won this competition last year but, in reality all who enter with good work are winners.

This year's title is: **Choose one of the following saints: tell us about his/her life and work and importance in the story of the Christian faith in Britain:**

St Alban, St Augustine, St Columba, St David, St Edward the Confessor, St Hilda, of Whitby, St John Fisher, St Margaret of Scotland, St Thomas More, St Margaret Clitheroe, Blessed John Henry Newman.

Every source (internet site, book pamphlet or other material) must be listed. It can be handwritten or typed, and illustrated if desired. *No cutting and pasting.*

Each entry, to be submitted by 30th May 2016, (2000 words maximum) must include the student's full name, date of birth and full name and postal address of the school. Schools are encouraged to set this task to groups.

Entries should be sent to:

Catholic Young Writer Award 2016
CUCT
63 Jeddo Rd
London W12 9EE

Brief comment on the CATSC Conference

The highlight for me was without doubt Cardinal Vincent's speech (in New Section of CISC website). He was inspirational and his Annunciation comparison was striking and chilling. He made a great impact, reminding us all of the importance of our calling and the best career guidance we can give. Our message needs to be more powerful than the call to terrorism.

Francis Campbell's address was memorable too – a mix of theology, philosophy, history and faith. Two points stood out for me as reflecting my school's philosophy – education must be inclusive ; we must educate the whole person – body, mind and soul. He referred to three languages of Catholic education – head, heart and hands : thinking, loving, acting.

Patricia Hawley (Headmistress of Our Lady's Convent School Loughborough)

New member of the CISC Committee

James Murphy O'Connor



We are delighted to welcome James to the committee. James, in his seventh year as Headmaster of Prior Park, is a man of vision and initiative as he has shown by his leadership of the setting up of a new Prior Park school in Gibraltar. A profile is in the Committee section of the CISC website.

Upcoming CISC Events

Wednesday 2nd March (St Benedict's, Ealing)

Sex and Relationships Education Study Day:
"Embracing Life-Giving Love"

Fri 22-1.00pm Sat 23 April (Eynsham Hall Hotel nr Oxford)

Introductory Conference for those judged to have potential to lead a Catholic School

Friday 6th May (Woldingham School)

Heads and Governors Study Day
"Governors—Keepers of the Vision"