

A RECENT education symposium in Perth showed that the loving arms of Our Lady of the Missions founder Sr Euphrasie Barbier RNDM still span the world.

Principals from more than 30 RNDM-founded schools in Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, England, and India gathered at Sacred Heart College in Sorrento to honour her charisma and to look for ways to share and collaborate.

The April 21-26 symposium heard from the order's global leader Sr Maureen McBride, as well as Western Australia's Director of Catholic Education Tim McDonald.

Australian Province Leader Sr Madeleine Barlow RNDM and Sr Marie Therese Ryder RNDM said the symposium had been a wonderful sharing of cultural and educational treasures.

"Our foundress's initial charisma was to go outside our own cultures and bring the gift of education mainly to women and children who were disadvantaged," Sr Barlow told *The Record*.

One of the symposium's speakers Sr Joicy Madassery RNDM, the principal of a college in Kolkata, delivered a paper on teaching in an inter-faith school.

Only two per cent of her school's 1,500 students were Catholic, with the rest being Hindu or Muslim.

Despite experiencing many localised challenges, the cultural sharing among principals also revealed great commonality.

"We were surprised when Sr Joicy talked about the issues confronting teenagers there. Everybody from Australia and New Zealand were nodding saying not much is different. The issues were very much the same," Sr Barlow said, citing drugs, fear of teenage suicide, alcohol, and an anti-authoritarian attitude as common challenges.

Prayer was a daily feature, a



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reflection of Euphrasie Barbier's conviction that a Christian could not be missionary if he or she were not first contemplative.

"While you were an active missionary, you were also a contempla-

dress said, it is no good going to the ends of the earth if you did not, first, know your God and spend time with your God."

Euphrasie Barbier did not share an older mentality of mission, that it was the missionaries' job to take God to a faithless people.

"She never had that understanding... She would say we go with God in our heart to meet God. Wherever we go, God is already there."

### The RNDM mission to bring the gift of education, mainly to women and children, continues.

tive prayer; you took time to attend to your spirituality," Sr Barlow said, "so that when you looked out at the world you would let your heart be wounded by the suffering and that would be the call of God. Our foun-

"A missionary must go with a respectful heart for the people and the culture and the way they are... to uncover God together," Sr Barlow said. RNDM schools in Western Australia and Victoria were giving students a global missionary perspective, Sr Barlow said, with groups of Sacred Heart College, Sorrento students and teachers missionarying to the disadvantaged in Vietnam on a regular basis.



Above, sisters and principals, lay and religious, from Australasia and Asia at a recent symposium in Perth.

# Euphrasie's spirit going

# strong

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