

## GATHERING TO REFLECT AND SHARE

The first Reflection Day for participants in the Ballarat Diocese's Lay Pastoral Ministry Program (LPMP) was held in Ballarat on February 25. Those who gathered came from many different parishes and places in the Diocese. This was the first Reflection and Formation Day to be held as part of the Program and it was very successful. Fr Justin Driscoll led the main reflection session, gently encouraging deeper thought about ourselves and pastoral ministry.



Bishop Paul Bird joined the gathering to present subject certificates to those participants who have completed online subjects. Over lunch there was lively conversation amongst the participants together with the Bishop, Fr Justin and Amanda Smith, Facilitator of the LPMP. While some of the participants had 'met' online through the discussion groups that are part of each online subject, this was the first 'actual' gathering of participants and there was positive feedback and helpful sharing about the different subjects and study experiences. There was further formation and reflection in the afternoon concluding with a visit to the nearby Diocesan Resource Centre.

LPMP Reflection Days will be held several times per year and participation in a number of these is part of the Diocesan Certificate in Lay Pastoral Ministry (or Youth Ministry) in addition to six online subjects. Most of the participants are working towards the Diocesan Certificate. Each subject is completed in five weeks (called a 'study cycle') and is studied online as part of a small group of students from different dioceses. There are six 'study cycles' per year and new students can start at any study cycle. You can do one subject or more, with the option of working towards a Diocesan Certificate. The Diocesan LPMP is designed to be flexible to the situations of different participants.



Online study is provided through the Diocese's partnership with the Virtual Learning Community of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives of Dayton University, USA. Ballarat Diocese's partnership with Dayton means the cost of study is low. Textbooks are available for borrowing from the Diocesan Resource Centre.

The Ballarat Diocese Lay Pastoral Ministry Program has been going for eight months now and the first Reflection Day was a joyful step forward in the development of the program. New participants are most welcome. The next study cycle is in May. More information is on the Diocesan website (LPMP link is towards bottom of home page)

[www.ballarat.catholic.org.au](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au)

Amanda Smith, Pastoral Services Consultant & LPMP Facilitator

Photos:

1. Bishop Paul and all those who participated in the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program Reflection Day.
2. Bishop Paul presented certificates to participants who completed online subjects last year.
3. Bishop Paul presented several subject certificates to Elizabeth Clarke from Terang Parish
4. Bishop Paul presented several subject certificates to Thomas Thekkumury from Cathedral Parish

