

# NOTRE DAME FOLK CHOIR VISITS BALLARAT

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2015 the place to be in Ballarat was St Patrick's Cathedral. Why? The presence of the Notre Dame Folk Choir. What an enthusiastic, passionate group of young singers.



The Choir was invited to visit Australia by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to celebrate their twenty-five years as a multi campus university and Ballarat was fortunate to be part of their tour. How fortunate we were.

The Notre Dame Folk Choir was established in 1980 with fewer than a dozen musicians. Over the past thirty years this number has grown until now there are over sixty members. During the thirty years the Choir has toured throughout the United States of America and had a number of trips to Ireland, however 2015 was their first trip to Australia.

The Choir have been invited to sing at a number of special Church events including being part of the Papal Choir when USA hosted World Youth Day. They have made a number of CDs which can be purchased via their online site, with many of the songs being composed by their Director.

Our day with the Choir began with a prayer service led by St Patrick's Primary School Ballarat. This group of Foundation to Year Six students, ably prepared and led by Jude Gustus and Kerin Johnston, set the tone for the day with their beautiful singing and reverent prayer. The Choir then presented an outstanding program of Liturgical music to those present in the Cathedral. What a sound of joy and heartfelt praise came from not only the voices, but the small group of musicians who accompany the Choir.



The Director and Founder of the Choir Mr Steven Warner facilitated a workshop and discussion opportunity for parishioners and teachers from around the Ballarat Diocese, utilising the beautiful voices of

his choir to enhance his message of the need for quality music in Liturgy. He discussed the need for simple, yet musical, hymns for those parishes where there are only a small number of singers and even fewer musicians. He emphasised the importance of preparing our children in the world of Liturgical Music – starting in Foundation and continuing to encourage them through Primary and Secondary schooling.



The day ended with Vespers with Bishop Paul Bird leading us in Prayer. The singing was again guided by the members of the Choir and enthusiastically supported by those who came for prayer – including members of other denominations from around Ballarat, due to it being the Cathedral's turn to lead Prayer for World Peace that evening.

On behalf of those who attended the day I want to thank ACU, especially Dr Clare Johnston and Dr Joe Fleming for organising the Notre Dame Folk Choir to come to Ballarat. Thank you to Fr Justin Driscoll at St Patricks Cathedral for hosting the day and to Ms Audrey Brown, Director of Catholic Education Ballarat, for supporting this wonderful venture. Those who attended learned much and gained much through their participation in both prayer and song. A day of uplifting the soul!

*Dr Susan Crowe*

*Photos:*

- 1. The Notre Dame Choir*
- 2. Mr Steven Warner and Dr Clare Johnston*
- 3. St Patrick's Primary School*
- 4. Fr Justin Driscoll welcoming all to the event*