



“SEEKING TRUTH, SEEKING JUSTICE, SEEKING A NEW DIRECTION”

The evening of November 2 was a truly inspiring, emotional, supportive and challenging one at Emmaus Primary School, Mt Clear as we welcomed a number of guests to our community to open a dialogue about our faith as Christians in a time when our Church has been disgraced by the sexual abuse of children.

Mr Francis Sullivan, the CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, Eileen Rice, Principal of St Alipius Parish School, John Crowley, Principal of St Patrick’s College and Fr Peter Sherman, our Parish Priest of St Alipius, Ballarat East spoke to a crowd of over one hundred who gathered in the Wayaperri building.



Each speaker spoke with such passion. Each of them moved us, sometimes to tears. Each spoke of ensuring that as a Church we never forget the evil that has taken place within our Church in the past or try to ‘sweep it away.’ Each spoke of how we must continue to ensure that our children are better placed today to ‘author their own futures’ by being supported to understand what it is that defines ‘respectful relationships.’ Each recognised the dignity of the human person; all people, regardless of race, colour, sexual orientation or creed.

The evening came about as the result of a team of parents in our community deciding that they wanted to try to find ways to encourage the adults in our community to engage in conversation about our faith as Christians. The conversation led us to reflect on the fact that there are no doubt many in our community who feel a sense of anger, distress or dismay at not only the abuse that has taken place but the management of it by Church leaders.

To this day there are still some within the Catholic Church who are almost dismissive of the evils of the past whilst hankering for a Church of bygone era. In opening up this vitally important conversation on this night we are at pains to stress that it will mean nothing if it is not followed up. One of the men present, a survivor of sexual abuse in Ballarat, made the comment to me that Thursday night was the best meeting he had attended in that he felt a genuine sense of ‘hope’ that change is happening. We must ensure that he, all survivors, their families and the families of victims of sexual abuse who are no longer with us are not let down.

The ongoing protection of children has to be front and centre in all deliberations going forward. We at Emmaus have so much to be proud of and in recognising and learning from the past let us look to the future with Faith, Hope and Love.

Brendan Maher – Principal

Media Release from the Truth Justice Healing Council about the gathering can be read [here](#)