



## CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS' YOUTH FESTIVAL BALLARAT

To celebrate the Year of Youth, the Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEO) planned and hosted a Youth Festival for students in the secondary Colleges across the diocese. The theme for the day was 'Open New Horizons for Spreading Joy: Young people, faith and vocational discernment' which is the theme for the Year of Youth across Australia.

Students from the secondary schools from across the Diocese of Ballarat gathered at Federation University - Mt Helen Campus to celebrate together. At first there was a little hesitancy among students but with the encouragement from and interaction with the two MCs for the day, Jarryd Atkinson and Jordan Hodge, inhibitions were soon broken down and a great sense of joy and energy was created among the participants. Jarryd and Jordan continued to share their joy as they worked with students throughout the day in workshops.

The day began with an Acknowledgment of Country which was beautifully led by students from all the participating secondary Colleges especially Damascus College Ballarat, Loreto College Ballarat and St Patrick's College Ballarat.





The key presenter of the day was Genevieve Bryant who brought the ‘sound of joy’ to the festival. She shared story and song about her own faith journey and how she came to be doing the work that she does across Australia. Genevieve and her band also led all the music throughout the day for our prayer and concluding Liturgy. Both singers and musicians from among the students were invited to work with Genevieve and the band to lead the music in the concluding Liturgy.

Throughout the day, students had the opportunity to participate in three rounds of workshops. These workshops encompassed a range of areas connected to the theme for the day. Workshops

were led by Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Youth Mission Team, Passionist Youth Team and Vinnies Youth. Fr Matthew Thomas spoke about the joy of his vocation and Fr Andrew Hayes shared the joy of sharing faith with the Muslim people of his town. Rachel Smith, Social Justice Education Officer with CEOB, had students working on Social Justice projects to take back to their schools. Josh Angrisano shared his Hip Hop skills to communicate the joy of his faith and Sam Clear spoke of the joy he experienced from walking around the world to promote peace and unity.

During the day, all participants and presenters had the opportunity to gather in prayer which was led by Fr Andrew with the music by Genevieve. The theme for the prayer was ‘The Gifts of the Spirit’. Students were invited to reflect upon the gifts they needed for themselves and their world.

The day concluded with Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul Bird along with Frs Rupert Bowd and Matthew Thomas. It was a joy-filled celebration and a fitting way to finish the day.

The day was a success because of the support that was received from the Catholic Education Office, schools, students, teachers, principals and the priests of our parishes. The sharing of talents and skills was greatly appreciated. It was a day of great joy and it was a great privilege to be part of the day.

*Bernadette Tolan – CEOB*







**FROM LORETO COLLEGE BALLARAT'S DIRECTOR OF FAITH & MISSION, MRS MANDY CARROLL**



A small group of Year 10 and 11 students attended the inaugural Catholic Schools Youth Festival, held at Federation University on Friday 27 July. This was a day generously funded and organised by the Ballarat Diocese and included some renowned key note speakers and presenters from the Sydney ACYF Festival of 2017. The overarching theme of the day encouraged the gathering to 'open new horizons for spreading joy,' an aptly chosen call, given that our young students are already such a source of hope and light anyway!

Around one hundred and fifty students from Catholic schools around the diocese gathered in Founders Hall and we were all treated to a broad range of encounters; spiritual, musical and ethical. The students had chosen to attend workshops offering a veritable feast of possibilities, with titles including: Wonder and Awe, The Past, The Present, What's our Future, and Walk4One. The latter was especially profound. Sam Clear is a Catholic Missionary who, over two years, walked 15,000kms from South America to Spain. Whilst his presentation included stories from this epic experience, he wanted us to ponder the question of why it is difficult to trust God. I stopped taking notes to focus on the responses from the young students in the tutorial room, all of whom were clearly engaged with the topic and offering profound reasons for their answers. Somewhat ironically, it was not a depressing or hopeless atmosphere that was generated. Indeed, it was quickly apparent that there is a genuine interest, indeed hunger in young people to consider the ways in which human beings treat one another and the need for evidence and facts in order to believe.

Somehow, the conversation got around to the issue of poverty and I was reminded of the huge piles of food and clothing left the day before on the celebration of Gonzaga Barry Day for Vinnies and Anglicare. Sam raised another kind of poverty; that of loneliness. Pauline Prebble touched upon this in her talk to the gathering during the Gonzaga Barry Day liturgy; that even more than food and clean clothes, more than showers and blankets, people who are homeless and marginalised will come to soup vans and breakfasts for the company and connection that is offered. There was so much to absorb and we came away with our heads literally spinning from everything we had seen and heard. The quote from Jeremiah continues to ring in our ears. *"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper*

*you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord.*

I tend to be a half glass full kind of person anyway but by the end of the day, that glass was brimming over...with ideas and pride and profound gratitude for the opportunity.

Congratulations to the following students for choosing to attend the festival: Amy Loader, Annie Bissinella, Ebony Earle, Eleanor Dunstan, Ellie Montgomery, Enya Duke, Maddison Fogarty, Morgan Shillington, Nyamal Nyak, Peyton Dodds, Renae Carter, Sarah Harrington, Sophie Storey, Zayda Vandenberg.