

“I want you to GET OUT of the churches.”

In mid-July 2018, I was part of the delegation from the Ballarat Diocese to the three-day evangelisation and parish renewal conference, Proclaim 2018, hosted by the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The experience was inspiring and the message I returned home with was perfectly summed up by an anecdote regarding Pope Francis that was shared on the first day of the conference and seemed to roll through the next three days, gathering weight as it went. Pope Francis was addressing a number of people in one of his several languages and exhorted them, “I want you to go out from the churches...., no I don’t think I have used the right words. I want you to GET OUT of the churches.” This paired perfectly with the overriding message of the conference, that we ought not be concerned with the significant headwinds that the Church is facing today; that regardless of our problems, we are still called to serve and sanctify the world through mission.

In my personal interactions with other conference attendees, as well as through the ‘facilitated conversations’ with guest speakers, I heard many inspiring stories and explanations of the innovative methods of mission occurring throughout Australia, none more so than the dizzying array of programs run or supported by the Good Shepherd Parish of Mt Isa. In this parish they have developed a number of programs to address the unique problems faced by the local community such as integration of newer migrants, lack of social justice for the large indigenous population and support to the small number of people from other faiths that have nowhere to meet, just to name a few.

I have returned from this conference refreshed and enthusiastic to begin to implement some of the ideas I gained from the conference, particularly in the area of youth and young adult ministry.

The four keynote addresses may be viewed at the Shalom TV Facebook page or at this link <http://www.shalomworldtv.org/proclaim2018> I would particularly recommend the opening address by Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who spoke persuasively and confidently regarding the challenges and opportunities that face the Church today.

I would like to thank the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation for the opportunity to attend this event.

Jamin Howman



The Bishops need rescuing!

“The Bishops need rescuing!” This was one phrase in many that captured the attention of the audience in a passionate opening address by Archbishop Mark Coleridge at the Proclaim Conference in July 2018 in Brisbane. “In our vastly changed circumstances we need to do things differently”, he said. We need to “launch Catholic leaders who can imagine a new paradigm” and we need this new paradigm in our local community of faith.

Echoing words of Pope Francis, Archbishop Mark said, “The parish can become anything. How do we imagine the parish as something new? A community that doesn’t leave everything behind, but is not afraid to do it differently. What does something different mean?” he challenged the audience.

Language is a key, the Archbishop said. Now we speak a language that people don’t understand. Saying it often or louder doesn’t help. We need to find the right words and images. At the centre is Jesus Christ crucified and risen – as present in an encounter. We need a new paradigm, a new proclamation of the encounter with Jesus. We need a church that is mystical, that offers the experience, the overwhelming experience of God. We need the poetry of this experience.

We need to be a humble church, a simple church, a listening church, and in the end a joyful church. Why would young people be interested in a joyless church?

Archbishop Mark’s comments were picked up later in the conference. There were four different workshops or ‘facilitated conversations’ at Proclaim including on Leadership. Tricia Casey and Br Damian Price led one group of around 25 people in exploring the call for a *different type of leadership*. They spoke of moving from the black and white to the grey. It’s not about command and control, right and wrong. “The questions and the concerns of the people of God are not black and white.”

Tricia and Damian spoke of authenticity in leadership, of ‘servant-hearted’ leaders. In whatever context of the church they work in, these creative leaders:

- Are seers of alternatives. Accept ‘otherness’, strangers, the foreign. *Both/and* not *either/or*. God is ‘other’ – the mystery we call God.
- Move forward by influencing events and inspiring people more than by ordering or demanding.
- Know that every one-sided solution is doomed to failure. Engage in genuine dialogue.
- Want to increase both freedom and ownership among the group – not foster subservience.
- Learn to study, discern, and search together with others for solutions. Community – true community.

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