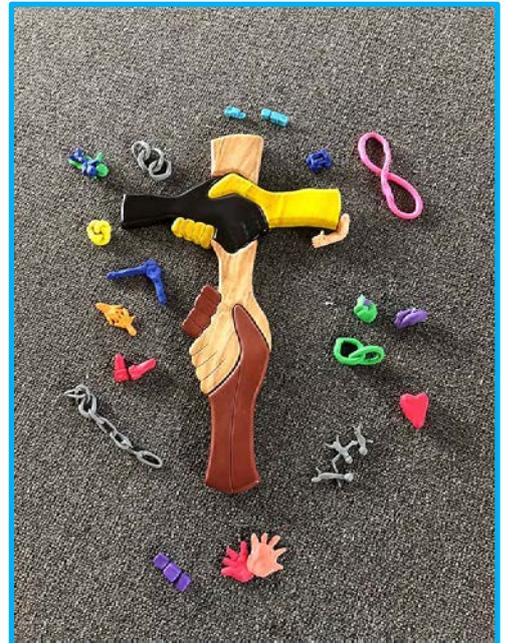


THE GRADUATE TEACHER PROGRAM

The Graduate Teacher Induction program is a three year integrated program designed to support graduate induction in the Ballarat Diocese and the teaching profession, within the particular context of working in the ministry of Catholic Education. The program reflects the partnership between the Catholic Education Office and schools, who together support the formation and professional growth of graduates as they journey in their profession and respond to their vocational call in this vital ministry of the Catholic Church. The following reflections are contributed by graduate teachers involved in the Religious Education component of these days.

On Tuesday, July 31 first-year graduate teachers from the Diocese of Ballarat took part in their second professional development session. Over the course of two days, the teachers gathered in Halls Gap to discuss and explore experiences, strengths, challenges and Religious Education. In doing so, they came together to identify commonalities, reconnect and build relationships.



During day one, Allan Hutchison led the teachers on a path of mindfulness, encouraging them to step back from the classroom itself and take the time to think about ways to lower personal stress and improve effective communication. The teachers worked cohesively to share possible solutions to resolve stress, drawing on their own methods and those shared on the day. Further discussion was made in regards to building good relationships with students, colleagues and parents.



The following day, Kate Lawry, Jo-anne van der Voort and Susan Crowe led the graduates on a journey of prayer, both personal and relative to the classroom setting. In doing so, the teachers' understandings of prayer was strengthened through engaging in conversations with God and others. Flowing on from prayer, the participants engaged in a workshop based around the pedagogy of Shared Christian Praxis. They discussed how life experiences and the Catholic faith tradition come together to recontextualise the Christian

story. In this way, the participants were able to grasp understanding from the New Awakenings as living through faith and experience.

As a conclusion to the day, Fr Andrew Hayes joined everyone for Liturgy of the Eucharist, whereby each graduate brought forward their new-found and strengthened understandings of the Mass. This was a lovely way to end the professional development session, as it allowed graduates to reconnect with one another and God as one community. Overall, the gathering gave new teachers the opportunity to analyse their experiences, reflect on their learnings and appreciate the continuous support of others, during their teaching journey.



*Jessica van Gaans
First Year Graduate Teacher*

On Wednesday, August 8 a group of second and third year graduate teachers from across the Ballarat Diocese met for their second professional learning session of the year. We attended three sessions over the course of the day, facilitated by John Meneely, Jo-anne Van der Voort, Kate Lawry and Susan Crowe. The graduate teachers find these sessions an excellent opportunity to network with their colleagues and share their teaching reflections.

The first session of the day was entitled, "Attending to the Teacher Within". John Meneely enlightened us about the interconnected relationship between our intellectual, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. A key insight taken from his session was the importance of our mission as educators.



During the middle session, we were taken through the history and development of the Mass through the ages. The Graduate teachers found this to be a particularly eye-opening experience, with many new discoveries taking place. We learnt about the importance of active participation during the Mass and modelling this positive and engaged behaviour to our students. A phrase that was discussed and practised was, "the Lord be with you," bringing new understandings for all of us. This welcome to everyone gathered had us responding, "...and with your spirit" in an enthusiastic fashion following Fr Andrew Hayes' greeting!

In the final session of the day, Graduate teachers were given a refresher session on Professor Thomas Groome's pedagogy of "Shared Christian Praxis", incorporating Dr Margaret Carswell's "Composite Model" as a way to teach scripture. A key learning from this session was the importance of contextualising scripture before the children are fully immersed. Preparing children appropriately provides them with the best opportunity to access the text with a deeper and more meaningful understanding.

As Graduate teachers, we very much look forward to these professional learning sessions as a way to come together and celebrate our strengths, learn from our colleagues and enhance our teaching. We look forward to what the Catholic Education Office has planned for us next!

*Matthew Manzl, Rose Russell and Emma Hancock
2nd and 3rd Year Graduate Teachers*

