

## LAY MINISTRY FORMATION DAY IN BALLARAT

The Diocesan Lay Pastoral Ministry Program held one of its two annual Reflection and Formation gatherings of participants in November in Ballarat. Fr Shane Mackinlay was the guest presenter, leading the main session of reflection. He drew on Pope Francis' 2018 *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and be glad) which focuses on the call to holiness. The group engaged with the session in a very positive way. Bishop Paul Bird also attended to present subject certificates to participants and congratulate them on their successful studies. Additionally, there was discussion about study experience and involvement in lay pastoral ministry, and the group shared lunch together. The feedback on the whole day was affirming with the opportunity to reflect on the Pope's inspirational words in *Gaudete et Exsultate* session particularly appreciated.



L-R: Jenny Keegan, Fr Shane Mackinlay, Damien McCartin, Liz McCartin, Rosemary Mecca, Andrew O'Flynn, Bishop Paul Bird, Elizabeth Clarke, Marie Shaddock, Jill Morse. (Congratulations to others who completed subjects in 2018 who were unable to attend this gathering)

The Lay Pastoral Ministry Program is open to people involved in any aspect of lay pastoral ministry in the diocese, either in parish life or other ministry. The Program provides the opportunity for formation through low cost online study with Dayton University. Many subject areas are available including sacraments, scripture, youth ministry, liturgy, leadership, RCIA, social justice, pastoral care and bereavement ministry. Subjects are studied one at a time in a five week long 'study cycle'. There are six study cycles each year. You can study one subject or more and you can start at any of the cycles. The next study cycle commences on January 20. Please contact us by January 9 to register.

It is two and a half years since Ballarat Diocese started the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program in partnership with the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation of Dayton University, USA, who provides the online subjects. In that time, twenty-three lay ministry participants have completed sixty-five subjects and the level of engagement with those subjects is very solid. One person has completed an overall Lay Pastoral Ministry Certificate and several more participants will complete their Certificates in 2019. Additionally, next year Catholic Education Ballarat has set up a pilot program as part of the Diocese's partnership with Dayton, to enable a cohort of diocesan teachers to study online subjects in a dedicated group.

If you are interested in participating, there is more information about the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program at [www.ballarat.catholic.org.au](http://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au) or email [amanda.smith@ballarat.catholic.org.au](mailto:amanda.smith@ballarat.catholic.org.au)

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