

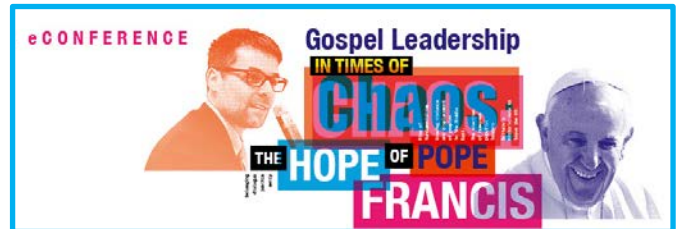


CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE  
of  
BALLARAT

# Diocesan e-News

## GOSPEL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CHAOS

Prominent international and national speakers from the political, media and business arenas joined with world-renowned theologians and leaders of religious congregations as guest speakers at BBI's 13th National eConference held on Thursday, 10 August from 10:30am-3:00pm.



Held in partnership with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, this year's eConference focussed on the theme, *Gospel Leadership in Times of Chaos: the Hope of Pope Francis*. Speakers at the event included the former NSW Premier and Foreign Minister of Australia, Professor Bob Carr, the Editor at large at The Australian, Paul Kelly and the Chairman of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Elizabeth Proust.

BBI also welcomed the internationally respected expert on Vatican II, Professor Massimo Faggioli from the USA as one of the presenters, alongside leaders of religious congregations including the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Sr Clare Condon SGS. An afternoon panel discussion was facilitated by ABC Religion Presenter, Noel Debien.

### Summaries from the eConference held in the Ballarat Diocese can be read below:

Eleven of us gathered expectantly in St Joseph's Parish Hall Warrnambool for this year's BBI eConference on August 10. We were intrigued by the diverse line-up of speakers and felt the inclusion of Bob Carr and Paul Kelly gave the eConference an added dimension by acknowledging the Church as part of the wider world – not an isolated institution.

We pondered the question: How do we truly 'live' the Gospel message in today's world? Do we really open our hearts to others, especially those in need? Compared with many in our world we are wealthy and live in relative safety but what about the poor in our own country - the many who now live on the street?

How can we understand what life is like for those who live in constant danger....people living in places like Syria and Afghanistan – or the millions of refugees trying to find a safe haven?

Does intervention by 'Western' nations eg. in Libya and Iraq, actually make things worse rather than better? What is 'our' motive for intervention? Then again, we are selective in our intervening – some countries like South Sudan are left 'to get on with it themselves' with many people starving and suffering and with no hope for the future.

Is much of the suffering in the world caused by the Western world's greed for resources, with little care for the environment of the whole planet?

So many thoughts and we came back constantly to the advice of Pope Francis on the need for 'dialogue, dialogue, dialogue!'

Sr Clare Condon SGS spoke about the rule of St Benedict that he established 1500 years ago in a world torn apart by 'wars, licentiousness and inhumanity'. A rule focussed on Gospel values. She finished by speaking about the need for a 'prophetic' person in our time – that 'possibly' Pope Francis may just be that Gospel leader.... 'may his call echo in our lives and may we let the Gospel be our guide'.

A footnote about the eConference: There is always a measure of nervousness as to whether technology will work – and if it does, will it last all day? This year, apart from a slight blip during Professor Faggioli's presentation, all was well.

We needed the subtitles but found them difficult to follow and somewhat distracting (following the eConference the transcripts were made available). There was also a small section to the right of the screen with questions and comments being uploaded all the time - that was rather distracting too.

Our group submitted a question concerning South Sudan. Knowing many questions were submitted, we were pleasantly surprised when our question was read out and given to Bob Carr for comment!

Overall, the eConference was a positive experience and left us with much to think and 'dialogue' about.

We look forward to next year's eConference.

*Mary Lancaster - Warrnambool Parish*

On Thursday, August 10, a small group came together in the Dining Room of the Cathedral presbytery not to eat but to be nourished by the influence of Pope Francis in today's Catholic Church.

A number of high-profile speakers presented their views of the state of the Catholic Church in Australia at this time. Much of what was said also applies to the Catholic Church in other parts of the world.

In fact, the eConference was available to the whole world thanks to the marvels of on-line electronic connections.

At our Ballarat venue, our small group was able to discuss the issues in the context of our own experience of the Church.

The eConference talks are still online but I suggest that any group that wishes to gather and discuss the issues would do better by waiting for a few weeks when a DVD version of the Conference talks will be available.

The DVD would make it much easier to select the best and most relevant input for the particular group. The DVD will be available from the Broken Bay Institute at reasonable cost. It will also be available for borrowing from the Ballarat Diocesan Religious Education Resource Centre.

You can find a more detailed description of the eConference at this link: <http://www.bbi.catholic.edu.au/news-events/110/article/1603/bbi-s-econference-reflects-on-the-hope-of-pope-francis-in-times-of-chaos>

*Fr Kevin Murphy – Ballarat*

