

Professor Thomas Groome was in the Ballarat Diocese to present workshops for Catholic school staff, school leaders, clergy and parish communities. He presented an all day workshop “Education From and For Faith – Jesus, Tradition and a Life in Faith” for Catholic school staff on May 21, as well as a session on May 25 for school leaders and clergy and a session on May 26 “New Evangelisation - Planting Seeds through Family and Parish” for parishes and clergy.

Over six hundred educators gathered to learn from Professor Groome at the workshop “Education From and For Faith – Jesus, Tradition and a Life in Faith” for Catholic school staff on May 21. After so many years of reading and reflecting on Groome’s books and exploring the movements of his Shared Christian Praxis with students and colleagues, Audrey Brown, Director of Catholic Education, said it was a joy to be in the presence of such a leader and teacher... and to be learning alongside colleagues who share in our diocesan commitment to bring “fullness of life to all”.



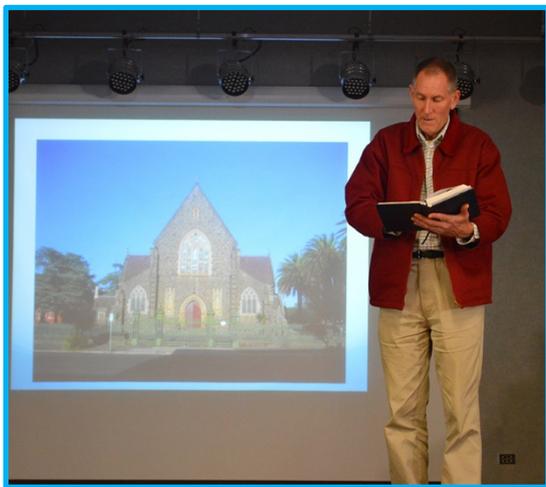
Cathy Whelan, Principal 2018 for St Patrick’s School Ballarat, said that this really was a once in a lifetime opportunity for many of the 600 plus teachers and staff who were in attendance! Professor Groome’s lifelong passion has been the creation of a Catholic education approach, modelled on the belief that students receive *Education From and For Faith* and that our catechists ‘enable people to bring life to faith and faith to life.’ Professor Groome’s passion, knowledge and expertise was truly inspirational. As a staff we feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend such an event.

Principal of St Michael and John’s Catholic School Horsham, Andrea Cox, commented that the framework of Awakenings, our Religious Education curriculum, is based on the work of Tom and in his own words ‘brings life to Faith and brings Faith to life’. She said we were reminded that as teachers in a Catholic School we need to ensure our school community is inclusive, remembering that the greatest commandment is to ‘love and respect the dignity of all’: that like Jesus we are accepting and welcoming of all. It is our responsibility to teach justice, compassion and mercy, affirming and empowering our students to engage with real life themes and issues. Encouraging them to ‘see for themselves’ what to embrace to live a faithful life. Our school should be a community of service and peace and a place of prayer and worship.

In the session on May 26, Professor Groome shared his thinking about the “New Evangelization” in the workshop “New Evangelisation - Planting Seeds through Family and Parish” with a focus on parish ministry. A few highlights for Audrey included:

- Whilst the traditional/missionary emphasis of evangelization was on saving souls and bringing people into the Church, New Evangelization, is more about bringing us out... through lives that witness to and share an optimistic and joyful faith.
- Every Christian and every community has the task to evangelize by living faith in their community and evangelizing their culture – through works of compassion, justice, peace-making. In Catholic education, we evangelize through how we deliver education; sometimes that may be the only way that we can reach out.
- Through our baptism, we too are commissioned to go out into the world, to live and share the Gospel, to nurture others in their faith – and through these interactions to grow our own faith as well.
- Effective evangelization must be crafted to the context of the receiver, starting with their lives, meeting people where they are at... and using that understanding to plant a seed around the possibility of faith.

- We plant the seed of faith and grow it through everyday practices – welcome and inclusion, respect in all interactions, purposeful and intelligent use of scripture, regular pauses for prayer, good liturgy that engages hearts and minds, music that calls us to action, opportunities for participating in works of mercy and justice (with rationale connecting to faith), use of art and symbol that connects with faith, practices that reflect reconciliation and justice... and especially through introducing our students and staff to the historical Jesus...
- Never underestimate the importance of sowing small seeds of love, hope and... when possible/timely, faith.



Fr John Monaghan observed that though Friday/Saturday was not an ideal time for parish clergy to attend an in-service instead of their past mid-week preference, it was more than compensated for by Professor Groome's Irish down to earth manner from his upbringing, in presenting his inspirational talks on living and preaching Jesus' Good News in today's world. He emphasised the value of Catholic education to enhance lives, how well the "New Evangelisation" is grounded in Vatican II and the critical dialogue between faith and culture in every nation. While not in any way on a self promotion tour, his book "Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New" (edited by Thomas Groome and Colleen Griffith) sold out and is a valuable source for continuing to tap into the rich fabric of our Catholic tradition that Professor Groome shared so effortlessly with us in our time together.

Professor Groome is a senior Professor of Theology and Religious Education at Boston College. He currently serves as Director of BC's Church in the 21st Century Centre whose mission is to be "a catalyst and resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church."

An award-winning author, Tom has written or edited some ten books, over two hundred essays and two primary school catechetical curricula. His best known major books are Christian Religious Education (1980), Sharing Faith (1991), Educating for Life (2002), What Makes us Catholic (2000) and Will There be Faith (2011).

Professor Groome has received many awards, including "Masters Teaching Award" from Boston College's School of Arts and Sciences. His lifelong passion is that Catholic education be *Education From and For Faith* and that our catechesis enables people to bring life to faith and faith to life.

Professor Groome's talks were recorded and in due course will be available for viewing.

