



## ANNUAL GATHERING OF BALLARAT DIOCESAN PASTORAL SUPPORT GROUP

Who would credit that this little group started meeting annually 30 YEARS ago when the group was finding its way into pastoral ministry in some sort of official sense. Some of our founding members have gone to their eternal home and we miss them dearly. The rest of us continue to carry on and welcome new faces to our group. They add a new dimension to our gathering and we move along trying to remain faithful to our humble beginnings.

Once again a very peace-filled assembly (twenty in number) of our Ballarat Diocesan Pastoral Support Group took place at Halls Gap from Sunday, October 20 until Wednesday, October 23. Our guest speakers, Margaret Hill and Fr Barry Ryan, made it a time of great learning for many of us as we re-claimed our faith, hope and love, wonder and awe.

This year the group welcomed a new face, Maureen McInerney from Horsham. Members enjoyed the comfort and tranquillity of the Pinnacle Holiday Lodge with our hosts Barry and Mimie. What an ideal place to reflect on our Cosmic Walk!



On Sunday evening we enjoyed a BBQ in the grounds of the Lodge and what beautiful weather blessed us!! After being well nourished by the food, drink and company we gathered in the Conference area for our introductory session led by Sr Maree Holt csb. Members had a chance to re-introduce themselves and share their journey of the past year. We concluded the evening with a reflective power point presentation on Creation put together from around Warrnambool by Mary Lancaster.

On Monday we were privileged to have Margaret Hill spend the day with us. Margaret led us on our "Cosmic Walk" using a series of paintings she has produced (two and a half years in the making!!!). Margaret had been commissioned by Earthsong back in 2014 to paint an Australian interpretation of the 'Story of the Universe – a cosmic walk'. These beautiful paintings provided the focus for our day of reflection on what it means to be an integral part of the great unfolding story. A prayerful ritual of the Cosmic Walk helped us to understand where we are in the 13 billion-year story. Margaret introduced us to the writings of Thomas Berry and in the afternoon we reflected on the Cosmic Christ. The Cosmic Christ refers to the view that all creation is sacred and manifests the Divine. *".....there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night"* (Pope Francis – *Laudato Si*). Our Monday evening meal at the Halls Gap Hotel was a true celebration of our time together and a time to absorb all that we had heard and done during the day.



On Tuesday morning we were again privileged to have in our midst Fr Barry Ryan who, in his own easy style, opened our eyes to new ways of living and understanding our faith. Barry presented us with a paper entitled “Ecological Sustainability and the future of the Church”. The concluding sentence reads, “Attention to ecological sustainability means attention to all the inhabitants of the earth and their habitats. This is at the hearts of the Church’s future.”

We concluded with a Prayer of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin sj prepared by Sr Patsy Bourke. We thank our Bishop, Paul Bird and the CDF for supporting us in this venture. Thanks also to Pauline Books and Media for their continued support.

And we thank God:-

- for this time of learning and reflection,
- for the presence of our gifted and skilled speakers,
- for a time of appreciation for one another; and
- for the source of encouragement and positivity that we became to each other as we move along in our place in the Story of the Universe.

*Clare Arundell*

