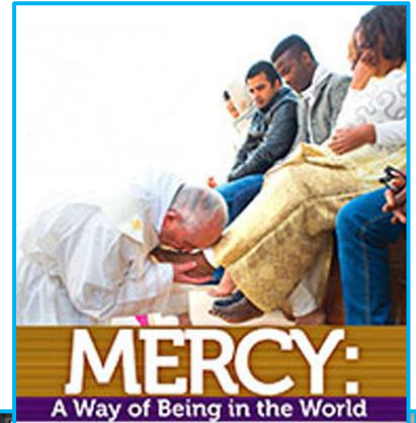


On Tuesday, September 20, twenty two people gathered in the rebuilt interior of St Patrick's Small Hall in Ballarat for the eConference. The Small Hall is now well set up with up-to-date electronic facilities that enabled a good reception of the eConference transmission which was transmitted from the Broken Bay Catholic Institute.

The topic was MERCY: A WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD. "Mercy" not understood merely as a pious attitude but as a program for action by the church community in the world.

Pope Francis is promoting this renewing program and has obviously inspired the Broken Bay Institute to pick up the theme as the topic for the eConference. Pope Francis himself is getting his inspiration from Jesus Christ and his vision for the Kingdom of God being made present in our world. A key characteristic of this vision-action is mercy.



Jesus himself was a person of courageous action. We get to be like him by entering into the mysterious reality that prayerful reflection on the scriptures opens up for us. Consequently it was not surprising that two of the keynote speakers in the eConference were scripture scholars: Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Sister Veronica Lawson. The third keynote speaker, keeping us grounded in current international and national realities, was Phil Glendenning whose talk was summarised in its title: The Cry of the Poor, the Cry of the Earth.

Mark Coleridge, drawing on the beatitudes of Jesus in the gospels, offered us a vision of possibility and hope. He reminded us of how Jesus sees the world and its needs, leading us to work with Him in bringing positive transformation to the world and to all people.



Veronica Lawson, an outstanding scripture scholar, is well known in the Ballarat diocese and elsewhere. As a Sister of Mercy it was especially appropriate that she described MERCY, drawing on the examples and teaching and the power of the mystery of mercy, as mediated to us through the sacred scriptures of both Jewish and Christian origins.

There was time for discussion in small groups after each of the presentations.

Towards the end of the gathering in Ballarat for the eConference, a short period of time was given to an evaluation of the Conference and a debriefing related to our experience of it. Evaluation: what we thought about the eConference - its content, the way it was organised and conducted. Debriefing: after the experience of the eConference, how do we feel?

The Broken Bay Institute will soon release the input for the eConference on a DVD. It would then be possible for parish groups to buy the DVD from the Broken Bay Institute or to borrow it from the Diocesan Resource Centre.

I suggest that the leaders of parish groups first watch the DVD and then decide which segments of it to use in a parish discussion group, perhaps with several sessions.

*Fr Kevin Murphy*

