



Dear Friends,

What a fantastic week it's been. Sometimes it's just brilliant to work for the Church and last Tuesday would have to be one of the absolute highlights. The National e-Conference- Year of St Paul was a huge success both in terms of numbers and its ability to connect people. It was that opportunity to connect excellent teachers with interested students and for those students to chat to each other. A fire is lit.

There were a number of firsts and lots of positive feedback across the country. What really touched my heart and soul was the opportunity this adventure offered to all the 'hungry and thirsty' Catholics in small parish schools, country parishes and isolated communities. It was a joy to hear their gratitude. They were able to participate in excellent adult faith formation, they were able to enter into a lively discussion with their people and then to offer their questions to the key speakers. This in itself is a true blessing.

We were very fortunate to have such gifted teachers in Sr Michele Connolly rsj, Fr Brendan Byrne sj and Fr Richard Leonard sj. The medium did not detract from their effectiveness, in fact it insisted that they get to the point and communicate with punch. It was a privilege to have Mr Mike Bailey as host for our e-conference he was the reliable, familiar face in a new and unchartered e-world.

I am so grateful to the hundreds of dedicated and enthusiastic people who worked to make this e-Conference a reality. These are the glorious people in Catholic Education Offices, Diocesan Offices, Universities and Parishes across the country who are fuelled by the same passion: to share their love of Jesus Christ. These are the people who have often been working for the Church for thirty years and who know in their heart of heart that there are so many Catholics who are hungry and thirsty for education in their faith and formation in sharing their faith: it's taught and caught.

Special thanks go to those working behind the scenes, in particular the Broken Bay Institute and the Diocese of Broken Bay working party that collaborated to achieve this success. No doubt we are also grateful to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference who was so supportive and insightful in this new initiative.

These are two of the many, many responses I have received.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to network with colleagues and openly discuss our faith. The day has made me aware of St Paul as an

unexplored apostle. He was trying to address the issues of society in his day, just as we address today's issues with our children."

And

"What a great event. It's amazing to be linked across Australia, across nations, in the pursuit of a deeper understanding and appreciation of our faith. And there is so much more to Paul than many of us realised!"

Sr Vivienne G

Dear Virginia...thanks you very much for all the work you put into the Conference I attended yesterday at Marymount College, Burleigh Waters on the Gold Coast. We had a very good facilitator at my table and she led good discussions after we heard the speakers.

They were marvellous and I know I can say the whole thing was a great success. Fr. Rafal Rucinski was in charge. We all benefited from the experience and now we understand more about our wonderful St Paul. I am 84 and the G/Grandmother of eleven little boys and one precious girl.

Lorraine P xxx

And now to ***The Year of the Priest***. In this month's edition of *Mission and Spirituality News* a number of our regular contributors have reflected and written on their insight into Priesthood.

I'm rarely lost for words but on this topic I struggle. I would not have a clue about what it feels like to be a priest in 2009. To the outsider it looks like a tough call. Maybe that will be one of the rewards of this year- the opportunity to find out what makes priests tick, what motivates their vocation and what are their struggles and dreams. We will have a contribution each month from a priest who will be invited to share their experience, strength and hope for all our benefit.

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