

MEDIA RELEASE

Ballarat Parish Priest speaks about his journey through the Royal Commission



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Fr Peter Sherman, West Ballarat parish priest, has spoken confrontingly about his journey over the past five years as the Royal Commission has exposed the shocking extent of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

Speaking at a community gathering at Emmaus Catholic Primary School in Ballarat earlier this month Fr Sherman told a group of more than 100 local school parents, staff and community members of the challenges he has faced as he has tried to come to terms with the abuse crisis.

“If I want to see change within the church, then I know that I also need to have change within myself. A change of mind and heart,” he told the gathering.

“And this asks of me to continually return to the grand tradition of the person and the story of Jesus Christ.

“My faith is not in the Church. My faith is in Jesus Christ. This relationship I must nurture above all, this is what gives me hope and sustains my faith.”

Fr Sherman spoke about what he has done within the Parish to rebuild trust for faith filled communities.

“Well, I can listen to the stories of the victims and the families with deep compassion. I can inform myself about the issue of sexual abuse in society and also to try to understand in some shape or form the pathology of the offenders. I go beyond the media for my information...to ensure that I’m well informed.

“I do all I can to ensure that children are safe in our parish communities including compliance with civil and church law and protocols including *Integrity in Ministry*, the *Code of Conduct for Caring for Children*, the duty that is mine and all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to police as this applies to me, to our employees and to our volunteers,” he said.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, said it was enlightening to hear a parish priest speak so openly, compassionately and publicly about child sexual abuse in the Church.

“Fr Sherman has demonstrated clearly that local parish priests must play an active part in engaging with survivors, helping rebuild trust and guiding and providing leadership for their local communities.

“Peter has demonstrated that when a local Church leader makes an effort to be part of the solution rather than remaining silent then great things can happen within a parish,” Mr Sullivan said.

The event was organised by Emmaus Headmaster, Brendan Maher, and was also addressed by John Crowley, Principal of St Patrick's College, Eileen Rice, Principal of St Alipius Parish School and Francis Sullivan CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council.

Read the full transcript of Fr Sherman’s comments [here](#).

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