

## E-BULLETIN # 25

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*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)*

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### ITEM 53

### religions get together

A group of over 50 which included rabbis, priests, imams and lay people have lived and talked together for three days at Pallotti College, a Catholic retreat in the Yarra Valley participating in the ninth annual winter conference of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association.



JCMA is sponsored by the three Victorian peak bodies: the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, the Victorian Council of Churches and the Islamic Council of Victoria.

This year's conference theme was The Prophet Motif. Various sessions were devoted to discussions of the attributes that made someone recognised as a prophet. Other sessions examined the implications of the

prophetic tradition for modern life. A central component of the JCMA conference is the daily “cluster groups” where people meet to discuss what they have learned.



A strong Jewish contingent, from a wide cross-section of the community, made up more than a quarter of the participants. JCMA vice-president Rabbi Shamir Caplan came for a day with his young family. (JCMA welcomes the attendance of families with children.) Rabbi Fred Morgan gave a masterly presentation in the form of a Talmudic text analysis of sections of the Torah describing episodes in the life of Moses.

Each day’s program begins with a “Contemplation” session led by one of the three faith groups. Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black, the faith convener on the Conference Committee in charge of the Jewish segment of the program, explained the significance of the tallit, Shabbat candles and challah, and brought along a Sefer Torah which had originally belonged to a congregation in Nakuru in central Kenya.

Food is of course a vital part of a residential conference. Pallotti provides vegetarian and halal food. Separate strictly kosher meals are arranged for anyone requesting it at time of booking. Free time is built into the program. A classic film, “Oh God!” starring George Burns (born Naftaly Birnbaum) in the title role, funny but serious, explored the interesting idea of what might happen if the Almighty made personal contact with a young supermarket manager and gave him a prophetic message to share with the world. Simultaneously, Jo Silver was leading a group of walkers through bushland to nearby Warburton. The previous night, Jo had participated in a panel of three where a member of each faith community told their personal stories.

Some of the free-time is completely unscripted. Rabbi Ian Goodhardt was seen late one evening, chatting for an hour with two young Muslim women who wanted to know more about Jewish holy days, beliefs and practices. Speakers’ Corner is an annual feature of the program, where people are given fifteen minutes to air their views on anything and everything. Dr Paul Gardner offered a rapid overview of Modern Orthodox Judaism. Rabbi Morgan expressed his discomfort with purely literal interpretations of sacred texts.

The conference is normally held in the first week of July. That won’t be possible for the next three years, as the fasting month of Ramadan – eleven days earlier each solar year – moves through July. This year’s conference committee has already recommended an August date in 2013.

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## a house with many stories

The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pallottine community house in Kew [Victoria] was a thrilling and heart-warming event. On 16 Jun about 90 people attended, including both local Archbishop Denis Hart and 'Bishop Raible' [acted brilliantly by a parishioner!].

In 1937 Raible was then Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberley [appointed 18 Jun 1935]. In a first he extended the Society into eastern Australia, establishing a Melbourne base to attract local vocations and to further the mission in the north-west where he, together with his fellow priests and brothers, was engaged in pioneering work among aborigines. He told the story of Kew's beginnings and how, at then Archbishop Mannix' suggestion, the house across the road from his own was bought from the Carmelites. The first resident was German Br Josef Schüngel, joined in their holiday time by Limburg students George Vill, Anton Omasmeier and Bruno Kupke who migrated in the middle of their training for priesthood and completed theology at the local Seminary. Inspired by his talks to secondary school students the first Australian Pallottines soon followed – John Hennessy, Roger McGinley, Joe Kearney, Frank Kelly and Herbert Rutherford, all destined to work in the Kimberley mission. Local Catholics were very supportive of the new novitiate and studentate. In time a Younger Set and a Pallottine Auxiliary were created, providing significant support through the difficult post war years.

Archbishop Denis Hart thanked 'Bishop Raible', and acknowledged the Pallottines for their contribution to the church in Melbourne especially through lay and religious formation. He was warmly received and stayed to examine an historic photo display and hear the reminiscences.

Guests' stories recounted how, in 1951, a new phase began with the arrival of men who were all to prove significant in the history of the Australian Region – Frs Walter Silvester [later Regional], Ludwig Münz [later Rector General], John Lümme and John Jobst [later Bishop]. In 1952 a Shrine to the Mother of God was constructed in the extensive grounds which was to become a power house of prayer and formation. Around 20 boys and girls' apostolic teams were formed of young people who went on to make their mark in Melbourne parishes. Arising from them the Mariana (formerly Ver Sacrum Mariae) Community emerged as a group of consecrated lay women, and the first lay missionaries were trained to move into vital support roles in the West Australian missions. The Kew house also became a place of pilgrimage for local German-speaking migrant families whose first chaplain was Pallottine Fr Leo Hornung.

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