

COBAR DEANERY PARTICIPANT STORY

By Vince Wren (Nyngan)

I grew up in Nyngan and was immersed in the Catholic religion. My Mum took me to Mass from the age of two. From kindergarten onwards, the first half hour of every day was religious instruction, as well as Religion being one of the actual subjects. Whether you wanted to or not, you learned. The nuns taught me Latin and what I had to do in the church, about the altar and Jesus living in the tabernacle. The three steps up to the tabernacle represent the three falls of Jesus on the way to Calvary and the Trinity. Every week we had to attend school Mass. At high school I had the Patrician Brothers at Fairfield and was in the army cadets. Each Friday we would march to the church with the whole school following us. Then when I was in 5th year of high school, the priest was away, so he asked if I could take the religious instruction class in the Redfern Public School. I got them to act out the Bible stories and I must have won them over. That was the basis on which I built my faith.

To me, then, education is the starting place for implementing all the good ideas that are coming from the Synod. It is the key and must be part of the answer. We have to educate not just children in the school, but parents and teachers as well. However, I am not sure how we do that. We have to start somewhere, for example: having weekly or fortnightly school Masses, examinations on religious curriculum, religious instruction in the high schools and more weekend Masses. We must get the kids involved. People say it can't happen, but you can't give up, you have to keep trying.

I thought the gathering in Cobar was excellent. I enjoyed listening to other people and there were some wonderful ideas and I heard other people's take on the issues. Everyone had something to say and it was all valid - there was not one suggestion that I thought was out of place. On my table, we had someone from Warren, a few from Cobar, one was a convert. I thought it was excellent because every parish is facing the same problems. Churches are closing, taking religion out of the community and making it more secular. Often there is no religious instruction or religious images in the home. But more heads are better than one.

I think that the more parishes come together and meet, and the more discussions we have, the stronger our plan of action will be. I came away from the gathering thinking that we have made a start and we have a lot of suggestions. It will take a lot of work to implement the ideas, but somehow we will need to look at what is most important, because we can't tackle them all at once. We need to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

