

## **World renowned canon lawyer launches BBI's new Governance and Canon Law courses**

Emeritus Professor Francis Morrissey OMI, one of the leading canon lawyers in the world believes accountability and transparency is more critical than ever before within Catholic Church institutions to ensure they strongly reflect the Gospel values upon which they were founded.

Fr Morrissey was speaking at the official launch of BBI's new Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Canon Law courses at the Polding Centre offices of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

BBI- The Australian Institute of Theological Education (BBI-TAITE) is the only tertiary institution in the country to offer online postgraduate courses that combine units in both governance and canon law, offering significant practical benefits to those in ministry, work or in a governance context in the Catholic Church today.

"Canon Law is a critical element in ensuring that Catholic institutions embrace the vision and values of the Church, especially in the field of ethics and in that critical area of respecting the dignity of each person", Fr Morrissey told those gathered at the launch.

The event brought together prominent leaders of religious congregations and canon law students and lecturers from across Australia.

Fr Morrissey, who is based at Saint-Paul University in Ottawa, Canada is widely regarded as one of the foremost experts in canon law in the English-speaking world, having been invited to speak on this critical topic in 50 countries.

Fr Morrissey was involved in the preparation of the Code of Canon Law that was commissioned by Vatican II and promulgated in 1983 and he has served as Consultor to Pontifical and Episcopal Conferences in the Vatican City.

Saint-Paul University has a strong partnership with BBI, allowing for Australian-based students to potentially undertake some of their postgraduate studies in canon law in Ottawa at a pontifically recognised university.

Emeritus Professor Morrissey said today's generation of increasingly lay Catholic leaders need to be well prepared to meet the challenges of balancing their obligations under canon and civil law.

"And in so doing, they should embrace the spirit of collaboration and transparency that was so much a part of the vision of the Second Vatican Council", he added.

One of the special guests at the launch, the President of the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand, Sr Maria Casey RSJ, said BBI's courses are well placed to meet the practical needs of those responsible for governance, whether in the Catholic education, health or social services sectors.

The National Director of Catholic Mission, Fr Brian Lucas, believes BBI's courses also help address a critical need in Australia for stronger practical governance programs for members of the clergy.

“While our priests are well formed in pastoral and liturgical ministry, we also need to provide them with stronger governance skills to be effective parish administrators”, Fr Brian said.

“Ultimately, the priest who can thrive in parish life is the one who is prepared to be a team-player, working collaboratively with the laity in the good governance of their parish”, he added.

The Chief Executive Officer and Principal of BBI-TAITE, Dr Gerard Goldman said providing strong formation in governance and canon law would become increasingly important over coming decades.

“Governance is without doubt the most pressing issue facing the Catholic Church in the next 20 years”, he explained.

“At BBI, we have therefore invested significant resources in this area to help equip Catholic institutions with the skills necessary to meet this critical challenge”.