



Nuncio reflects on the emerging style of Pope Benedict XVI

The emerging style of Pope Benedict XVI as a Pope of Dialogue, could offer a model of 'reaching out' which had relevance for all Episcopal ministry, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ambrose De Paoli said today.

Archbishop De Paoli was speaking at the opening session of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference plenary meeting, being held at the Mary Mackillop Centre, in Sydney.

He said that two of Pope Benedict's public encounters with priests gave a clue to his style. The first was in Valle d'Aosta, at a gathering of clergy and the bishop.

"He had no problem in stating that as Pope there is the danger that he could be somewhat removed from the real everyday life, even from the life of the priests who are on the front lines, in their parishes, and whose apostolate is made even more demanding with the decline in vocations," Archbishop De Paoli said.

"He affirmed that being with those priests was a great joy and comfort for him. It is a wonderful, warm, human conversation, sharing with the priests and their bishop their hopes and sufferings and struggles for the kingdom."

Archbishop De Paoli said that in a similar vein, the Pope gathered with the clergy of Rome at the beginning of the Lenten season.

"It became a dialogue with the Pope fielding questions from his clergy. At one point he even mentioned that he was not quite sure if he understood the question which was posed. Again, a warm, human, open conversation borne on the wings of his strong faith."

The Apostolic Nuncio pointed to the Pope's recent dialogue with the young in relation to World Youth Day, to be held in Sydney in 2008 as well as his more recent reflection on the first year of his pontificate in which Pope Benedict said he will be "*mite and fermo*" – gentle and strong.

"For not a few commentators there seems to be emerging a Pope of Dialogue," Archbishop De Paoli said.

"This does not imply that his predecessor was not. But there is dialogue and dialogue, as there are different ways to dialogue, each with a personal touch.

"The way of reaching out to preach the good news of Jesus is not of secondary importance, as we all know. The key that opens the door to the core message is the way it is presented.

"We need the promised assistance of the Holy See for this as much as for our fidelity to the core message of Jesus."

Archbishop De Paoli assured the Australian Bishops of his prayers for a successful plenary meeting.