

Bishops continue spiritual pilgrimage to the threshold of the Apostles

Australia's Catholic Bishops have continued their spiritual pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles, with a Mass at the great basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls in Rome.

The principal celebrant of the Mass was Archbishop John Bathersby, of Brisbane. The Mass, together with the Mass at the tomb of St Peter, was one of the spiritual highlights of the ad limina Postularum visit - "to the threshold of the apostles". In his homily, Archbishop Bathersby referred to St Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles. He prayed that the Bishops and all people would continue St Paul's great evangelizing work "in what we so proudly call the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit". St Paul's was built over the burial place of the Apostle and consecrated in 324. The building of the first place of worship over St Paul's tomb has been attributed to the Emperor Constantine, with a larger basilica erected by later emperors. Destroyed by fire in 1823, it was rebuilt on the same foundations and consecrated by Pope Pius IX. The Bishops' ad limina visits to Vatican congregations have continued, with meetings today on canon law matters.

Private audiences with the Holy Father are also progressing with some of the NSW Bishops having had their audience. Also scheduled this week are visits to congregations for Laity, Culture, Justice and Peace, Migrants and Evangelisation of Peoples. The Bishops are due to attend a dinner hosted by the Beda College and will tomorrow celebrate Mass at the Church of St John Lateran.