

Bishops and all Christians need the heart and faith of the Apostles - Archbishop

The Catholic Bishops of Australia have concelebrated Mass before the tomb of St Peter in one of the most spiritually significant events of their ad limina pilgrimage to Rome.

The bishops celebrated the Mass below St Peter's Basilica with a small congregation of Australians who live and work in Rome.

The principal celebrant was Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Francis Carroll of Canberra-Goulburn.

In his homily, Archbishop Carroll emphasised the need for Bishops and all the baptised to have both the heart and the faith of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

He was building on an image from Cardinal Sodano during the Pope's jubilee celebrations last year in which Pope John Paul II was described as having the Faith of Peter and the missionary Heart of the Paul.

"That set me thinking - do I have the faith of Peter and the heart of Paul? But I think I'd like more. I'd like to have the faith and heart of Peter and the faith and heart of Paul," Archbishop Carroll said.

He said Peter had a personal faith and a conviction in Jesus which is needed just as much today to continue building His Church.

"In this city, we look also to Paul - called dramatically to believe in Jesus Christ - new faith which changed the whole direction of his life. Paul's heart was also set on fire with love for Christ," Archbishop Carroll said.

Standing before the tomb of St Peter, Archbishop Carroll prayed "for the faith of Peter and the love of Peter".

"Then and only then can we be good shepherds. We will have the heart that draws the assurance of Jesus - feed my sheep," he said.

"There is a special message for us Bishops as Pastors with awesome responsibilities, but all Christians, all baptised, all disciples of Jesus must profess faith in Him - surrender our hearts in love to Him - all must be good and zealous shepherds to our sisters and brothers, to preach the Gospel and build up the reign of God."

Following the Mass, the bishops continued their ad limina program of visits to various Vatican organisations, including the Congregation for Bishops, the Congregation for the Clergy, Caritas Internationalis and the Pontifical Council for the Family.