Archbishops in private audience with Pope John Paul II

Two of Australia's archbishops who met the Pope in private audience today said he appeared to be in good spirits as he discussed a range of topical issues from vocations to the family and refugees.Archbishop Francis Carroll of Canberra-Goulburn and Archbishop Adrian Doyle of Hobart were the first of Australia's bishops to have their private audience with Pope John Paul II as part of the ad limina visit.The private audience with the Successor of Peter is a deeply valued experience for bishops.It is also seen as an important part of the Holy Father's pastoral ministry, as he receives the bishops with whom he exercises pastoral ministry and listens and talks with them about their mission in their diocese.Archbishop Carroll said the 83-year-old Pontiff, who this week became the third longest serving Pope in history, appeared to be in good spirits."He seemed to be quite bright," he said.

"We spoke particularly about vocations and the family."Archbishop Carroll presented the Pope with a copy of a new book on the history of the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese.Archbishop Doyle said the Holy Father raised the question of refugees with him.The Archbishops said they both congratulated the Pope on his 25 years as Pontiff.The 34 other bishops in Rome for the ad limina will have their private audiences with the Pope progressively over the next two weeks.The bishops have also begun their program of visits to various Vatican organisations, with delegations attending the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Ecclesia Dei and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.