



December 4, 2009

News from the November 2009 Plenary meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference held its Plenary Meeting at Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, from November 23 to November 27.

Proceedings began with ACBC President, Archbishop Philip Wilson presiding at the concelebrated Mass of the Holy Spirit in the Mary MacKillop Chapel. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto gave the opening address to the meeting.

Archbishop Wilson welcomed the observers from Catholic Religious Australia, who were Sr Clare Condon sgs, Fr Timothy Brennan msc, and Fr Timothy Norton svd. He also welcomed Bishop Tony Burgess, the observer from the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The Bishops also celebrated Mass in the Maronite Rite on one occasion during the week. The main celebrant was the Maronite Bishop, Bishop Ad Abikaram.



Bishop Ad Abikaram celebrating Mass in the Maronite Rite during the Plenary Meeting

Cor Unum President addresses ACBC meeting

Cardinal Paul Cordes, President of the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum” addressed the Bishops during their meeting, telling them he “gives thanks to God” for the opportunity to reflect with them on the charitable mission of the Church.

Cardinal Cordes recalled for the Bishops that “Cor Unum” was instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1971. He said that Pope Benedict XVI, in his first Encyclical *Deus caritas est* said that the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum” is “the agency of the Holy See responsible for orienting and coordinating the organisations and charitable activities promoted by the Catholic Church”.

Cardinal Cordes said Pope Benedict’s choice of topic for his first encyclical was significant.

“In this, he gave the decisive direction for his Pontificate,” Cardinal Cordes said. “The love of God is the theme that he constantly refers to – ‘We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul. And we must love our neighbour as our self’. This is the program that is hard-wired into every human person. If only we had the generosity to live by it.”

Cardinal Cordes said the tasks of the Pontifical Council are specifically:

- To encourage the faithful to bear witness to evangelical charity, as participants in the mission itself of the Church, and to support them in this commitment;
- To foster and coordinate the actions of Catholic institutions devoted to helping the poor countries, especially those that provide them with relief in their most urgent needs and disasters;
- To facilitate the relations between these Catholic institutions and the international public organisations that operate in the same field of aid and development;
- To monitor and promote the projects and works of charitable solidarity and brotherly aid aimed at human progress.

Cardinal Cordes’ address was followed by questions and discussion. His Eminence and Mgr Anthony Figueredo then concelebrated Mass with the Bishops and joined them for dinner.



Archbishop Philip Wilson, Cardinal George Pell and Cardinal Paul Cordes, President of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum.

Planning underway for Mary MacKillop canonisation

Planning is underway for the likely canonisation of Blessed Mary MacKillop, some time next year.

Sr Anne Derwin rsj, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of St Joseph, addressed the Bishops and explained current arrangements for planning events, locally and in Rome, surrounding the canonisation.

A working party has been established, comprising Mr Gerry Gleeson, Fr John Usher and Sr Judith Sippel rsj, which is responsible for co-ordinating the planning on behalf of the Congregation, the Bishops Conference and the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Sr Anne said that the Postulator of Mary MacKillop's cause, Sr Maria Casey rsj, was currently in Rome for an indefinite period to assist as needed with the ongoing process towards canonisation.

In a wide-ranging discussion following Sr Anne's presentation, the Bishops pledged to work with the Sisters to ensure that the canonisation of Australia's first saint would be a time of grace for the Church in Australia, noting that it would present a wonderful opportunity to engage with the community about what it means to live a holy life.

New Director Appointed for Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

Fr Maurizio Pettena CS, was appointed as Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office during the Plenary Meeting.

Fr Maurizio has been the acting director of the office since the retirement of Monsignor John Murphy due to health reasons.

Speaking after the meeting, Fr Maurizio said he was looking forward to working on behalf of migrants and refugees in his new role.

"I have a sense of gratitude to the bishops of Australia for their trust," he said. "In particular I express my thanks to Archbishop Wilson and to the bishop delegates and especially Bishop Joe Grech and the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life. A thought goes out to my predecessor, Monsignor Murphy, and I am grateful that I had a time to work with him in the office which was a sort of introduction.

"The ACMRO represents the commitment of the church in Australia to offer an ecclesial response to the reality of migration, which regards some 214 million people and more than 30 million refugees.

“The impact on the Church in Australia (Graced by Migration) is indeed wholesome. The Catholic Church in Australia has topped 5 million people, because of the great impact of migrants. We can safely say that Australia is what it is, largely as a result of immigration.”

Earlier in the meeting, Fr Maurizio addressed the Bishops on issues relating to the migration of priests and religious and the Labour Agreement with the Federal Government. The Labour Agreement is due for review by July 2010.

The Bishops passed a motion commending the work of Monsignor Murphy and expresses its appreciation for his work and wishes him well in his retirement.

Health and community services under the spotlight

Significant issues are arising relating to governance of health and community services agencies, which will have an effect on the Church’s activities in these areas, the Bishops were told at their meeting.

Mr Martin Laverty, CEO of Catholic Health Australia, and Mr Frank Quinlan, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia, led a discussion on these issues as well as issues surrounding relationships with the Bishops Conference.

CHA outlined to the Bishops the need for government to improve sustainability of Catholic aged care services, the threat to Catholic private hospitals posed by possible changes to tax concessions, and the possible role of Catholic hospitals in the Federal Government’s health reform agenda.

A proposal to establish a partnership of the Bishops and CHA to develop a new Guide for Catholic Governance was canvassed. The motion was passed, and CHA anticipates that work on the guide may commence early in the New Year.

The Bishops also approved a motion, that Conference supports the closer collaboration between Catholic Health Australia and Catholic Social Services Australia.

In its report to the Bishops, the Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services noted the need for both a broad vision for the health and social service ministries, but also for immediate and independent action in areas that may well be coming up for tender and decision in the near future.

The Commission noted that the future funding arrangements in family services, often supporting core services within diocesan agencies, should be a major priority for national

action. It also noted the need for future linking of social services in a model that allows both local autonomy and unified national action.

Bishops look at ways to safe-guard marriage

The Bishops held a lengthy discussion on issues relating to marriage and same-sex relationships and their recognition in law.

The discussion came as the Federal Government indicated it would not intervene to overturn the recent introduction of same-sex unions in the ACT.

The Bishops' discussion touched on a number of important areas, including the defence of marriage as being a special kind of relationship which is defined as the commitment of a man and a woman to live as husband and wife to the exclusion of all others and for life. Their discussion also affirmed that the Church deplores unjust discrimination against homosexual people, while confirming that in society the making of certain distinctions is essential.

The Bishops concluded their discussion by saying that the Church must speak up for crucial institutions such as marriage while supporting people in all walks of life. Basic human rights can and should be afforded to all people without sacrificing the bedrock of society that is marriage and the family.

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life and Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals will now take carriage of the issue for further consideration and action.

NCEC seeks to educate Catholic schools on needs of Eastern Rite students

The National Catholic Education Commission is looking at ways to ensure that the needs of Eastern Rite students are adequately met in Catholic schools.

The NCEC has begun a review of a resource published a decade ago by the ACBC, and another resource published at about the same time by the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The Bishops were informed that the NCEC Religious Education Committee plans to develop advice on what could be undertaken to inform Latin Rite children about Eastern Rite

liturgical, prayer and spiritual traditions, and ways in which Australian Catholic schools can be more sensitive to the needs of Eastern Rite students.

In other matters, the NCEC said it was working on a multimedia resource to assist school children with the introduction of the new translation of the Roman Missal. The NCEC is also preparing research and policy development in readiness for the Commonwealth's upcoming review of school funding. The Bishops approved a policy document in this regard at their meeting.

Bishops approve pastoral letters

The Bishops approved two pastoral letters put forward by the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry, to be released over the coming months.

One is a letter to priests to mark the Year for Priests instituted by Pope Benedict XVI.

The other is a letter to Catholic women, to mark the 10th anniversary since the release of the Bishops' Social Justice Statement which followed the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* research project.

Revised *Towards Healing* to be published

The latest revision to the *Towards Healing* document will be published and also posted on the ACBC in January 2010, following its approval by the Bishops at their meeting.

Towards Healing has been constantly updated since it was first published in 1996, in the light of experience and feedback from those accessing the protocol.

The latest revision is the result of a comprehensive review of *Towards Healing*, carried out by Professor Patrick Parkinson, a professor Law at Sydney University and an expert in child protection.

The revisions were earlier approved by Catholic Religious Australia.

Bishops meet with Jewish leaders

At the conclusion of the Plenary Meeting, members of the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations met with leaders of the Jewish community at Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney.

While this was the 10th such meeting, it was the first conversation to take place at Mary MacKillop Place. Bishop Michael Putney noted the significance of this venue as the Jewish community in Adelaide had given hospitality to Mary MacKillop and her sisters in Adelaide.

Conversation focused on the possible Bill of Rights and related issues as well as the need for religious voices in public debate. Concern was also expressed about continuing anti-semitism.



Bishop Michael McKenna, Sr Elizabeth Delaney, Mr Jeremy Jones, Bishop Michael Putney, Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett, Mr Peter Wertheim AM, Mr Bill Arnold, Rabbi Jeffrey Kammins, Mrs Peta Pellach, Mr Robert Goot AM SC, Archbishop Philip Wilson.

New Missal draws closer

The Australian Bishops have completed their final canonical vote in relation to their approval of the texts for the new English translation of the Roman Missal.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, the Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Liturgy, told the meeting that it is now anticipated that the new Missal will be published in early 2011.

In preparation for the publication of the new Missal an international catechetical resource is being developed. The multi-media resource, to be used by English speaking nations around the world, is being prepared by Fraynetworks, a work of the Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne. Its preparation is under the direction of Fr Peter Williams, the Director of the National Liturgical Office.

Entitled “Become One Body, One Spirit in Christ”, it will be completed by the end of 2009 and will be launched in London this month by Bishop Arthur Roche, Bishop of Leeds and Chairman of the Leeds Group (of English-speaking Bishops’ Conferences).

It will be available for distribution throughout the English-speaking Catholic world by the end of February 2010. The resource will be launched in Australia at the national representatives in liturgy gathering to be held in Perth in early February 2010.

On other liturgical matters, the Bishops voted to approve the establishment of a National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board which will concern itself with researching and advising Bishops and others who request assistance on the matter of ecclesiastical architecture and sacred art.

Help at hand for Church entities engaging in social networking initiatives

A Social Networking Protocol has been approved by the Bishops for use by Church entities and Church employees, volunteers and members of official Church organisations or groups.

The Protocol was developed by the Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation on the advice of the Australian Catholic Media Council, in response to requests for guidance in this area from some dioceses and youth ministry workers.

The introduction to the Protocol says that Social Networking has emerged as a major phenomenon in which the online building of social networks for communities of people who share interests and activities has fundamentally changed the way in which people, especially young people, communicate and share information.

“While noting that social networking sites should not be seen as a substitute for actual community life, but as something that can underpin and enhance the life of actual communities, the Church wishes to take advantage of social networking opportunities as one means of communicating the love of Jesus Christ to people,” the Protocol says.

“In doing so, however, Church entities and Church employees, volunteers and members of official Church organisations or groups, need to be aware of appropriate boundaries and activities when communicating in the name of the Church in an online environment.”

The draft protocol is meant to be advisory, rather than prescriptive, in nature, so that the principles it contains can be adapted to policies formulated at the local level.

It will be sent to each diocese and made available on the ACBC website. It is envisaged that it will be updated as new technologies and new issues emerge.

In other media news, the Bishops approved the staging of a Second National Catholic Media Congress in 2012.

This follows the successful 2009 Congress – the first such gathering to be held in the Church in 25 years. It attracted 120 delegates from a broad cross-section of Church entities.

Mrs Debra Vermeer, Communications Director for the ACBC, advised bishops of her intention to retire from her position at the end of January 2010. Archbishop Wilson thanked her for her outstanding contribution to the work of the Conference.

Youth Ministry gears up for Madrid 2011

The ACBC will appoint a World Youth Day 2011 worker to its national secretariat to assist with preparations for what is expected to be a large pilgrimage to the event in Madrid, Spain.

The appointment is for a period of two years and is part of a wider WYD 2011 Project. The WYD 2011 Project is based upon past experiences and approaches to attendance at international WYD events prior to Sydney 2008.

The Bishops also noted the appointment of Harvest Pilgrimages as the official WYD 2011 tour provider.

In other youth ministry related news, the report of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life said that Senior Youth Ministry Projects Officer, Malcolm Hart was working with the Australian Catholic Youth Council in focusing on three key areas:

- Implementation of strategies identified at the Youth Leaders Gathering 2008;
- Plans for an Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Convention in 2010;
- Plans for supporting Australia's participation in WYD 2011.

Marriage, Life and Family issues

The Plenary Meeting noted that the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life has agreed in principle to a third National Family Gathering being held in Melbourne in 2011 to affirm, support and form families in the concept of evangelisation through the family.

The Bishops also noted the successful completion of the Walking with Love symposium series in each capital city.

A resource pack comprised of a DVD and study guide has been produced to enable dioceses and parishes to address the issue locally, including running smaller-scale version of the symposia locally. The resources are based on the belief that if the incidence of abortion is to be reduced, the women who are facing difficulties in keeping their unborn babies need to be supported. The resource pack provides some suggestions on how this may be done at the local diocesan and parish levels.

The Bishops Commission reported that the resource is being taken up enthusiastically in Victoria where the CEO is taking action to have it presented in all Catholic high schools, and in Brisbane where a parish pastoral care program has been instituted around it.

Meanwhile, in its report, the Commission sought to promote among dioceses and Catholic schools the use of fertility education through Natural Family Planning.

Statements issued from the November Plenary Meeting

A statement on the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* of Pope Benedict XVI, providing for Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans seeking full communion with the Catholic Church was issued from the meeting. Click on this link, [Anglicanorum Coetibus](#) or go to www.acbc.catholic.org.au.

ACBC Appointments

Fr Frank Devoy has been appointed as director of the Office for Clergy Life and Ministry for a further three years following approval from Bishop Jarrett.

Conference re-appointed Father Joe Caddy as Chairman of the Catholic Social Services Australia Board for a third, three year term.

Conference re-appointed Mr Tony Davies and Professor John Warhurst for a further three year term on the Catholic Social Services Australia Board.

Conference approved the appointment of Bishop Peter Stasiuk CSsR as Episcopal Promoter for the Apostleship of the Sea for the three year period 2010 to 2012.

The Conference noted that the following members of the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry have responsibility for the indicated advisory bodies:

- Australian Fraternity of Catholic Clergy (ACCC) - +Justin Bianchini
- National Council of Priests (NCP) - +Donald Sproxton
- Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) - +Michael Malone
- Office for Clergy Life and Ministry & Australian Catholic Council for Clergy Life and Ministry (ACCCLM) - +Brian Heenan, + Justin Bianchini
- National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS) – +Bill Morris, +Brian Finnigan
- Lay groups - +Brian Finnigan, +Brian Heenan
- Office for the Participation of Women (OPW) & Council for Australian Catholic Women (CACW) - +Michael Malone

The Commission for Justice and Development advised the Conference that it had decided on the following portfolio responsibilities:

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

- Chair: Bishop Christopher Saunders

Caritas Australia

- Chair: Archbishop Adrian Doyle
- Deputy Chair: Bishop Eugene Hurley

Catholic EarthCare Australia

- Chair: Bishop Julian Porteous

ACBC Councils membership

The Plenary Meeting was advised by the relevant Bishops Commissions of the following appointments to ACBC Councils for terms of three years:

Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council

Mark and Ursula Boyd

Australian Catholic Disability Council

Mrs Barbara Harris

Dr Robert Manga

Sr Helen Merrin OP

Rev Paul Pitzen

Australian Catholic Youth Council

Anita Parker
Benita De Vincentiis

Australian Catholic Life Council

Martin Laverty
Anne Marie Eldick
Ray Campbell
Bronia Karniewicz
Trish Mowbray

Council for Australian Catholic Women

Lyn Horner (Townsville)
Sarah Lentern (Parramatta)

Australian Catholic Media Council

Christine Hogan (Church Resources)
Kerry Myers (Parramatta)
Beth Doherty (Canberra-Goulburn)

Australian Catholic Council for Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations

Rev Denis Stanley

Catholic Mission National Council

The Conference noted that Francis Leong, James Evans, Susan Grout, Barry Urwin and Lana Turvey have been elected to the Council. Fr John Grace was elected but later decided not to continue as the elected Council member from Queensland. In his place David McGovern has been appointed as a member of the Council. Bishop Joe Grech remains the nominee of the Bishops Conference. Trish Harding from Toowoomba remains Directors' nominee. Sr Cathy Solano rsm has been nominated by the CRA as its representative. The Director is currently approaching others to join the Council.

NATSICC Councillors

Conference noted that the list of NATSICC Councillors 2009 – 2012 is as follows:

John Lochowiak	SA
Thelma Gertz	Qld
Melissa Brickell	Vic

Cathie Wilson	NT
Dolly McGaughey	TSI
Kathleen Callow	WA
Ronita Barratt	Tas
Lisa Buxton	NSW
Kerry O'Callaghan	ACT
Cameron Harris	Youth