



December 4, 2006

“We Have a Story” – collection of stories from people with a disability, an inspiration and a blessing for the Church

A new book containing a collection of stories from people with disability, their families and faith communities would be an inspiration and a blessing for the Church in Australia, Bishop Max Davis said today.

Bishop Davis officially launched the book, entitled “We Have a Story”, in Canberra today. The launch followed a Mass at St Peter Chanel’s Church, Yarralumla, which was attended by many people with disability and their family, friends, carers and parish priests.

The Chief Celebrant was Bishop Eugene Hurley, chairman of the Bishops’ Commission for Pastoral Life. Assisting him was Bishop Davis, the Commission’s Delegate for Disability Issues. A number of priests also concelebrated.

A key feature of the Mass was the participation of people with disability in the liturgy. Altar servers were Hayden Quinlan and Brandon Toohey from the Gordon Parish in the Diocese of Ballarat. Mellissa King from the Diocese of Bathurst read from Isaiah and the book of Gospels was processed in by Graham, Michelle and Brendan Franklin from the Mount Gravatt Parish in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The gifts were presented by Kieran, Maureen, Bevan and Damien Gallagher from the Maroochydore Parish, also from Brisbane Archdiocese.

The Mass also featured the national launch of a new hymn to celebrate the gifts of all members of the Church. Entitled “One Body in Christ”, it was written and sung by Amanda McKenna of the Parramatta Diocese. Amanda was accompanied by the Faith and Light ACT Signing Choir.

Following the Mass, those present, gathered for the official launch of “We Have a Story”. Many people in the room had given their own story to the project.

Anthony Succar from the Croyden Park Parish in NSW was one of the people with disability to address the launch. He spoke of the importance of hope, saying he had found hope again after returning to his Catholic faith.

“I thank God every day for my parish and pray that disabled people everywhere find hope in the Catholic faith. It is in my parish that I find hope and am truly at peace,” he said.

Bishop Davis said thanked those who had put forward their personal stories for the book.

“What a treasure,” he said. “Every one of these stories is a great, exciting little glimmer of a real jewel in life. It is inspiring for the rest of the Church, inspiring for each other – a real collection of blessings.”

Bishop Hurley also thanked those present and those whose stories feature in the book, saying: “We want to thank you for the gift you are to the Church”.

“We want to listen carefully to your experiences so that the tragedy of anyone being excluded from our Church community might be avoided,” he said. “May this just be the beginning of a wonderful journey together as we learn from one another.”

Others special guests present at the launch included Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Monsignor Jude Thaddeus, representing the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ambrose De Paoli. Dr and Mrs Ron Pirola, the chair-couple of the Family Work Group also spoke at the launch.

The book follows on from the “I Have a Story” pastoral document for parishes, released in 2004. The project was co-ordinated by Patricia Mowbray, Disability Consultant to the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life.

Copies of the book can be ordered by contacting the Secretariat for Pastoral Life at disability@catholic.org.au or by phoning 02 6201 9868.