



Media Release

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Catholic Bishops reach out to those who have been away from their faith

The Catholic Church is to undertake its biggest ever outreach this weekend with a nation-wide newspaper advertising blitz in which the Bishops issue an open invitation for Catholics who may have been away from their faith to reconnect with the Church community.

In the advertisements, the Bishops say they want to welcome back people who have drifted away from the life of the Church for whatever reason, or people who have never really been a part of it.

“The Church is God’s family and, like any family, has its differences,” they say. “Sometimes people are hurt by other family members. We ask your forgiveness if you have been hurt in some way through the Church.”

The Bishops also acknowledge that some people have drifted away because of the pressures of life.

“Why not join us again? We need each other. We need your help in carrying on the mission of Jesus. Only with you, can we be all that Jesus calls us to be as his Church. You have a God-given gift which you alone can bring to the Church. We need that gift.”

The advertisement encourages people to connect with the Church again simply by going along to Mass, talking to a priest or calling a special hotline on 1300 4 FAITH (1300 432 484) where trained staff will help put people in touch with a local Church community.

As a follow up, in parishes across Australia next weekend (21-22 June), Catholics who are in the pews will receive a pastoral letter from the Bishops, encouraging them to make their parish a place of true welcome for people who do respond to the invitation to return.

The letter encourages parish communities to make use of two new resources developed by the National Office for Evangelisation. The first is called *Reconnect* and is a six week program for parishes to run for people wishing to return to the practice of their faith. The second resource is called *Rewired* and is a similar program aimed at encouraging young people to engage in the life of the Church.

In their pastoral letter, the Bishops say that the World Youth Day celebrations, to be held in Sydney from July 15 to 20 will be a unique and powerful witness to Jesus Christ and to life in the Church.

“World Youth Day will challenge all those who have Jesus in their heart to reflect more deeply on their relationship with him. It may well be the occasion for many to turn again to the family of the Church,” they say.

For more information contact Marita Winters at the National Office for Evangelisation on 02 9211 7873 or 0438 491 574, or visit www.evangeliseaustralia.com.