



**A STATEMENT FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE**

In 2007 Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, retired Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Sydney, published a book entitled “Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus.”

We are grateful for the contribution Bishop Robinson has made to the life of the Church. We are deeply indebted to him for his years of effort to bring help and healing to those who have suffered sexual abuse and for what he has done to establish protocols of professional standards for Church personnel in this area. In responding to the issues raised in the book, we do not question his good faith. However, people have a right to know clearly what the Catholic Church believes and teaches, and the Bishops have a corresponding duty to set this forth, as we seek to do in this statement.

After correspondence and conversation with Bishop Robinson, it is clear that doctrinal difficulties remain. Central to these is a questioning of the authority of the Catholic Church to teach the truth definitively. In Saint John’s Gospel, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples in order to lead them into the fullness of the truth (cf. John 16:13). It is Catholic teaching that the Church has been endowed with this gift of truth.

The book’s questioning of the authority of the Church is connected to Bishop Robinson’s uncertainty about the knowledge and authority of Christ himself. Catholics believe that the Church, founded by Christ, is endowed by him with a teaching office which endures through time. This is why the Church’s Magisterium teaches the truth authoritatively in the name of Christ. The book casts doubt upon these teachings.

This leads in turn to the questioning of Catholic teaching on, among other things, the nature of Tradition, the inspiration of the Holy Scripture, the infallibility of the Councils and the Pope, the authority of the Creeds, the nature of the ministerial priesthood and central elements of the Church’s moral teaching.

The authority entrusted by Christ to his Church may at times be poorly exercised, especially in shaping policy and practice in complex areas of pastoral and human concern. This does not, in Catholic belief, invalidate the Church’s authority to teach particular truths of faith and morals.

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