



## **Archbishop Wilson seeks personal insights from political leaders**

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Philip Wilson sought a personal, rather than a political, insight when he had the chance to pose a public question to John Howard and Kevin Rudd last week.

Archbishop Wilson, who had met with each leader personally, was called upon to ask the first question to both Mr Howard and Mr Rudd following their presentations to the Australian Christian Lobby's 'Make it Count' forum at the National Press Club.

The addresses by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were webcast live to an estimated 80,000 Christians around Australia, in an unprecedented event for Australian politics.

Archbishop Wilson asked Mr Howard: "What are the personal qualities, as opposed to the political qualities, that you believe are necessary for authentic leadership? What role, if any, has religious faith had in forming your personal leadership qualities?"

In reply, Mr Howard said that the first requirement for authentic leadership was "a very strong belief in what you want to achieve for your country".

"The second requirement is extreme physical stamina because public life is very physically demanding.

"And my Christian beliefs have formed me."

Mr Howard said he drew particular inspiration from two parables – the Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Talents.

"The Parable of the Good Samaritan shows that everybody is deserving of respect and dignity, there is a great moral obligation to serve. And I've always seen the Parable of the Talents has being the free enterprise parable," he said.

Following Mr Rudd's address, Archbishop Wilson was asked to pose the same question to the Opposition Leader that he had directed to the Prime Minister.

Mr Rudd said that for him, "the key thing in leadership is to know what you believe in and why, and not to oppose for opposition's sake".

"Leadership is also about admitting that there are things you don't know and about being fair dinkum about what you can fix and what you can't.

"For me, it is also about, in those quiet prayerful moments in Canberra, reflecting on what I can do constructively to make this a better and more humane country and recognising that those who sit opposite are not sons of the anti-Christ."

In their addresses, the two leaders acknowledged the Christian heritage of the Australian nation and outlined their support for maintaining Christian prayer in Parliament and for insisting that marriage remains between a man and a woman.

Both leaders spoke of the need to strengthen families and address the work-family balance. Mr Howard said the Coalition would do this primarily by “continuing to run a strong economy”, and keeping employment high, while Mr Rudd said Labor would soften industrial relations laws to provide more certainty and security for workers and families.

Mr Howard announced his government would spend \$189 million on "cleaning up the internet" for Australian families, blocking pornography, upgrading the search for chat-room sex predators and cutting off terror sites.

Mr Rudd announced that a Labor government would prepare a Family Impact Statement on every submission which went to Cabinet.

To download video of the “Make it Count” forum go to [http://www.acl.org.au/national/browse.stw?article\\_id=16242](http://www.acl.org.au/national/browse.stw?article_id=16242).

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