



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Bishops carrying prayers with them on pilgrimage

**Media Release**

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Australia's Catholic bishops have arrived in Italy and are preparing for their pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul with a period of prayer and discernment.

Almost 40 bishops will be in Rome next week for the *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit, translated as "To the Threshold of the Apostles".

The visit, typically held every five years, sees active Australian bishops celebrate Mass at the four papal basilicas, including those dedicated to Sts Peter and Paul, meet and pray with the Pope and hold conversations with officials from the various agencies of the Holy See.

Due to delays in the rotation of *Ad Limina* visits for other episcopal conferences, this will be the Australian bishops' first visit in Pope Francis' six-year pontificate. The last visit was in 2011.

"We are very much looking forward to hearing from and speaking with Pope Francis," Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge said.

"For many of the bishops, this will be their first time meeting Pope Francis and, for quite a few, their first *Ad Limina* visit. It's an important opportunity to reflect on the apostolic witness of St Peter and St Paul, and to enter into pastoral dialogue with the Holy Father, the successor of Peter."

Archbishop Coleridge said that among the topics to be discussed in the Vatican will be the Church's ongoing response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the preparations for the Plenary Council and the Church's changing profile in Australian society and what this means in areas like health care, education and social welfare.

"The visit is a time for us to celebrate our communion with the Pope despite the separation of distance. It's also a time for us to learn from those who serve in the offices of the Holy See and for them to learn from us," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"We will also pray for our people at the tombs of the apostles, and I ask the Catholic people of Australia to pray for the bishops as we enter into this pilgrimage of faith."

This week the bishops are on retreat, as part of their journey of the Plenary Council. They will reflect deeply on the meaning of discernment and will reflect upon the Council's six National Themes for Discernment, which were announced at Pentecost.

"When the bishops decided to convoke a Plenary Council to consider the Church's place and mission in contemporary Australia, we knew it would have to be a journey of prayer, a time to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"This week, we are going more deeply into that experience of listening to the voice of God in our lives and in the Church in Australia at this complex time – and doing so in the shadow of the great feast of Pentecost."

Archbishop Coleridge said the bishops last year agreed to hold a retreat in 2019. The decision to hold it in Italy was made when the Holy See confirmed the dates for the *Ad Limina* visit.

Regular updates on the bishops' *Ad Limina* visit will be posted at: [www.catholic.org.au](http://www.catholic.org.au)