



Media Release

16 July 2004

Holy Father accepts retirement of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has accepted the retirement of Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, due to ill-health, on Thursday 15 July 2004.

Bishop Robinson was born on 10 August 1937 in Richmond, the son of Alexander and Kathleen Robinson. He was educated at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill and Marist Brothers, Hunters Hill. He studied at St Columba's College, Springwood and Urbaniana University, Rome (DCL), and was ordained to the Priesthood on 21 December 1960. Fr Robinson served as an assistant priest in the parishes of Croydon, Lindfield and Northbridge, and on the staff of the Catholic Institute of Sydney as a lecturer in Canon Law from 1967-1983. He also served on the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal and was secretary (1969-1976) and President (1976-1983) of the Canon Law Society. He was Consecrated Titular Bishop of Rusa and Auxiliary Bishop to Archbishop of Sydney on 8 March 1984 at St Mary's Cathedral. He published *Marriage, Divorce & Nullity: A Guide to the Annulment Process in the Catholic Church* in 1984.

By taking a proactive role in devising processes within the Church for the prevention of sexual abuse, he has made an enormous contribution world-wide towards raising the consciousness of Church leaders to their responsibilities in this very difficult and sensitive area, and to developing appropriate and compassionate pastoral responses to those who have been hurt. He is the foundation chair of Encompass Australasia, a psychosexual programme established in 1997 jointly by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes for Church personnel who were guilty of offences against children or of adult boundary violations. He has overseen the development of Encompass to provide specialist psychological services for people in helping professions struggling with psychological issues or wanting to enhance their ability to live life with vitality.

As chair of the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Board, a position he has held since 1986, Bishop Robinson has taken a vitally active interest in the ongoing education of teachers in Catholic Schools, particularly in the field of Sacred Scripture. Consciously setting out to promote among teachers a level of Biblical literacy equal to their literacy in other areas of their lives, he presented a series of lectures on St Mark's Gospel. These were so well received that he expanded on them and made them accessible to a wider audience through a book called: *A Change of Mind and Heart: The Good News According to Mark*. The book has been acclaimed for its fresh and imaginative approach to the study of this Gospel. A later book, *Travels in Sacred Places* was published in 1997.

He has served for many years as the Chairman of the Catholic Education Commission, NSW and has worked extensively in the fields of Catholic Education, Ecumenism, Canon Law and professional standards in ministry. He was instrumental in organising the highly acclaimed Confirmation 2000 and Confirmation 2005 events. In March 2004, the Australian Catholic University awarded him with an honorary Doctor of the University in recognition of his work in the Towards Healing process.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, said he was "enormously grateful for Bishop Robinson's manifold contribution."

"I regret that Bishop Robinson's health has forced him to offer this early resignation," Cardinal Pell said. "On behalf of the priests and people of the Archdiocese I wish him every blessing and better health for the future."

Arrangements for a suitable public tribute will be advised shortly.

For more information, please contact Catholic Communications on (02) 9390 5300.