

Australia sends Silver Jubilee prayers, best wishes to Pope John Paul II

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President Archbishop Francis Carroll has sent the best wishes of Australia's Catholics to Pope John Paul II on the 25th anniversary of his Pontificate.

Archbishop Carroll said the milestone was an extraordinary achievement for the 83-year-old Pope, who is the fourth longest-serving pontiff in history.

"On behalf of the Catholic people of Australia, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference sends its greetings and prayerful support to the Pope on this wonderful occasion," Archbishop Carroll said.

He was speaking from Rome, where, along with other senior Australian bishops, he is joining in the silver jubilee celebrations.

The week-long celebration will include a Mass, a concert in the Pope's honour, as well as lunch with the College of Cardinals and heads of bishops' conferences.

The celebration will conclude with the beatification of Mother Teresa of Calcutta on World Mission Sunday.

Each diocese in Australia will mark the occasion in its own way, with many bishops and priests planning special Masses.

"I've also suggested the praying of the Rosary, given the Pope's particular devotion to it," Archbishop Carroll said.

"I extend an invitation to everybody to pray in thanksgiving and gratitude for the Pope's extraordinary leadership of the Church and for blessings on His Holiness on this momentous occasion."