

Bishops' Conference Plenary Meeting: Update No. 1

Letter to the Holy Father

The text of the Bishops' Letter to the Holy Father is as follows:

"The Australian Catholic Bishops, gathered in Conference during this Year of the Great Jubilee, send cordial greetings to your Holiness. We send you our warmest good wishes and the assurance of our prayers on the occasion of your approaching 80th Birthday.

"We journeyed in spirit with you and shared the personal joy which you experienced during your recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the other sites that have such special significance for Christians and other believers.

"We are grateful for your letter to priests for Holy Thursday 2000 which you signed in the Upper Room. It is a place of sacred significance where Christ gave us the gift of the Eucharist and the priesthood and is a treasure trove of memories and inspiration. We are conscious of the treasures we bear in earthen vessels, and the need for perseverance on the path of conversion and reconciliation as we strive with our priests and people to be faithful disciples of Christ.

"In this Great Jubilee Year the many programmes of prayer, reflection and action in our Dioceses afford opportunities to open ourselves to the gifts and challenges of the Good Shepherd.

"We wish to assure you of our affection and solidarity as we meet as a body of your brother Bishops. We renew our pledge of communion with you, and seek your Apostolic blessing on our meeting and on all our Churches."12.5.2000

Acknowledgement of Archbishop Gleeson's recent death

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference formally acknowledged and expressed regret and sorrow regarding the recent death of Archbishop Gleeson. His contribution to the working of the Conference was outstanding and his continual interest was encouraging. Each meeting he sent a personal greeting. May he rest in Peace.

Election Results

President: Archbishop Francis Carroll (Term expires, April 2002) Vice-President: Archbishop John Bathersby (Term expires, April 2002) Central Commission: Archbishop Francis Carroll (re-elected until April 2002) Archbishop John Bathersby (re-elected until April 2002) Cardinal Edward Clancy (re-elected until April 2002) Archbishop Adrian Doyle (April 2001) Archbishop Leonard Faulkner (April 2001) Archbishop Barry Hickey (re-elected until April 2002) Archbishop George Pell (re-elected until April 2002) Bishop Geoffrey Robinson (April 2001) Bishop's Committee for Aborigines: Bishop Christopher Saunders Chairman Bishop Heenan Secretary Bishop Hilton Deakin Bishops' Committee for Canon Law: Bishop Peter Quinn Chairman Bishop Philip Wilson Secretary Bishop John O'Connell Bishops' Committee for Clergy and Religious: Bishop Justin Bianchini Chairman Bishop Luc

Matthys Secretary Bishop David Walker Bishop Michael Malone Bishops' Committee for Doctrine and Morals: Archbishop George Pell Chairman Bishop David Walker Secretary Bishop Michael Putney Bishop Philip Wilson Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-faith Relations: Bishop Michael Putney Chairman Bishop Peter Ingham Secretary Bishop Peter Stasiuk Bishops Ted Collins Bishops John Gerry Special thanks to Bishop Raymond Benjamin who has completed 16 years of service on this Committee. Bishops' Committee for Education: Bishop James Foley Chairman Bishop Barry Collins Secretary Archbishop George Pell Archbishop John Bathersby Bishops' Committee for Employment Relations: Bishop William Brennan Chairman Bishop John Satterthwaite Secretary Bishop Noel Daly Bishop Luc Matthys Bishops' Committee for Evangelisation and Missions: Bishop William Morris Chairman Bishop Joe Grech Secretary Archbishop Barry Hickey Bishop Chris Saunders Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life: Archbishop Faulkner Chairman Bishop Geoffrey Mayne Secretary Bishop Eugene Hurley Bishop David Cremin Bishops' Committee for Finance: Archbishop Faulkner Chairman Bishop Peter Ingham Secretary Bishop Patrick Dougherty Bishops' Committee for Health Care: Bishop John Gerry Chairman Bishop Peter Connors Secretary Bishop Michael Malone Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace: Archbishop John Bathersby Chairman Bishop William Morris Secretary Bishop Hilton Deakin (Chairman of Caritas) Bishop William Brennan (Chairman of ACSJC) Archbishop Adrian Doyle Bishop Christopher Saunders Special thanks to Bishop Jeremiah Coffey who has completed 9 years of service on this Committee. Bishops' Committee for the Laity: Bishop Barry Collins Chairman Bishop Peter Connors Secretary Bishop Denis Hart Bishop Brian Heenan Bishops' Committee for Liturgy: Bishop Kevin Manning Chairman Bishop James Foley Secretary Bishop Peter Ingham Bishop Denis Hart Bishops' Committee for the Media: Archbishop Francis Carroll Chairman Archbishop Barry Hickey Secretary Bishop Peter Quinn Special thanks to Bishop Patrick Dougherty who has completed 9 years of service on this Committee. Membership Panel: Bishop Kevin Manning Chairman Bishop John Satterthwaite Secretary Bishop Brian Heenan Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees: Bishop Patrick Dougherty Chairman Bishop Peter Stasiuk Secretary Bishop Joe Grech Bishop David Cremin Special thanks to Archbishop Barry Hickey who has completed 9 years of service on this Committee. Joint Committee of ACBC and ACLRI for Professional Standards: Bishop Geoffrey Robinson Chairman Bishop Ted Collins Secretary Bishop Philip Wilson Sister Angela Ryan ACLRI Bishops' Committee for Social Welfare: Archbishop Adrian Doyle Chairman (Member of ACSWC) Bishop Pat Power Secretary (Chair, Natural Family Planning Board) Bishop Gerry Coffey (Member of ACSWC) Bishop Eugene Hurley (Centacare Australia) Special thanks to Bishop John Gerry who has completed 24 years of service on this Committee, in its various forms.

Appointments

Apostleship of the Sea Bishop Patrick Dougherty has been re-elected as Bishop Promoter of the Apostleship of the Sea for another term of three years. Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life Patricia and Glen Mowbray will be the official delegates of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference at the World Meeting of the Holy Father with Families to be held in Rome in October. National Catholic Education Commission Dr Peter Tannock & Mr Greg Woodburn have had their respective terms on the NCEC extended until 31 December 2000

Revised ACBC Statutes

The revised Statutes of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference have been finalised and approved by the Bishops and will be forwarded to Rome for the Vatican's approval.

FCBCO General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) will be held in Sydney, Australia in 2002. The topic of the Assembly will be on the Apostolic Exhortation concerning the 1998 Synod for the Bishops of Oceania. The date is yet to be set.

Trinity Sunday Liturgy

The Liturgy for the Official Eucharistic Celebration of the Jubilee – Trinity Sunday, 18 June 2000 – has now been approved. Copies of the Liturgy can be obtained from the ACBC web-site. Copies can also be obtained from the Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Committee for the Liturgy, Fr Tom Elich on (07) 3224 3332 or the Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Committee for the Great Jubilee, Mr Martin Ebdon, on (02) 6201 9845. The liturgical suggestions will also be available from Jubilee offices within Dioceses.

Establishment of John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Melbourne

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference approved the establishment of a new campus of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family.

The campus will be located at Victoria Parade, East Melbourne. This site currently houses the Catholic Theological college, the Melbourne Archdiocese Pastoral Formation Centre and the Mannix Library.

The Institute will offer Masters' degrees in theology, in Bioethics and in Pastoral Studies – all with a marriage and family focus – as well as certificates and diplomas in the same areas. Pontifical licentiates and doctorates with specialisations in marriage and the family would also be offered in due course. All these degrees would be granted by the Pontifical Lateran University.

Following the Bishops' Conference's approval of the establishment of a campus here in Australia the search will begin for a Director.

It is anticipated the Institute would have its first intake in July 2001.

Joint Meeting of ACBC and representatives of the ACLRI

On Saturday, 13 May members of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and representatives of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes met at the Chevalier Conference Centre in Kensington for half a day.

The draft research document on sexual abuse among clergy and religious in Australia, "Towards Understanding", formed the basis for last Saturday's pastoral discussion between bishops and clergy and religious. The session was facilitated by Sr Angela Ryan and Mrs Mary Gow from the Diocese of Broken Bay.

Work on the document continues.

Australia will be the official hosting site for World Day of the Sick celebrations in 2001

The Vatican has requested that Australia be the focal point for the World Day of the Sick celebrations in 2001. President of the Pontifical Commission for Health Pastoral Care, Archbishop Javier Barragan, will be visiting Australia in July this year for a preparatory meeting. World Day of the Sick will be celebrated on Sunday, 11 February 2001 in Sydney.

Archbishop Carroll to make "Pilgrimage to the Heart"

As the newly elected President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis Carroll will be making the "Pilgrimage to the Heart" in June this year.

Australian Lay Missionary Gratuity Fund

The Australian Lay Missionary Gratuity Fund has been extended to include a family allowance. The Bishops' Conference has approved 25% of the adult allowance for each child in the family. (The current gratuity is \$800.00.) This small gratuity is a token of appreciation. It is presumed other persons have offered support in various forms.

The definition of a lay person, for the purpose of the Australian Lay Missionary Gratuity Fund has been revised. It now reads:

Volunteers his/her skills in response to a request from a local Church community; Is a member of the Catholic Church; Is neither an ordained minister nor a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life or Society of Apostolic Life; Is sent by his/her local Ordinary and supported by the local Church community; Is accepted by the local Ordinary of the accepting Diocese and welcomed by the local Church community; Has completed a suitable program of preparation, and where possible made a commitment to a re-entry program within twelve months of returning home.

Monsignor George Crennan's 100th Birthday

Monsignor George Crennan visited the Bishops' during the Plenary meeting when he was honoured for his approaching 100th Birthday. Archbishop Barry Hickey, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees congratulated Monsignor Crennan and thanked him for his service of migrants and refugees from 1949 to 1995, prior to making a presentation.