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Media Release

Archbishop welcomes Papal Encyclical on the Eucharist

Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference President, Archbishop Francis Carroll today welcomed a Papal Encyclical Letter in which Pope John Paul II reaffirms the Eucharist as the wellspring of the Catholic faith.

Archbishop Carroll said the Pope's letter, issued today during Holy Thursday Mass in Rome, focused on the central role of the Eucharist in the Church.

In it, the Pope reaffirmed that the Church draws her life from the Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

The Pope also noted that in parts of the Church, abuses of the celebration of the Eucharist had occurred, leading to confusion.

He urged that the sacrament be celebrated with due reverence and in all its fullness, never losing sight of its sacrificial nature.

Archbishop Carroll said the encyclical also contained some beautiful personal reflections from the Pope on the place of the Eucharist in his own life.

He said the encyclical re-stated the pontiff's strong commitment to working towards full Christian unity, while again acknowledging existing differences among denominations regarding the Eucharist.

Because full Church communion has not yet been achieved, the Holy Father pointed out that the "burning desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord" cannot be satisfied.

He added that "this desire itself is already a common prayer of praise, a single supplication".

"The Holy Father points to issues of which we are aware, such as the need to promote vocations to the ordained priesthood, and challenges us to sustain our prayers and efforts in that regard," Archbishop Carroll said.

"This encyclical is a passionate reaffirmation of traditional teaching on the Eucharist and an important contribution by the Pope to the Church in the 25th year of his Pontificate."

"I welcome the Pope's teaching and guidance on this important issue, so central to Christian life."

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