

Address by Cardinal Clancy regarding new video Faces

FACES - The Mission of the Australian ChurchState Parliament House
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A prominent politician, now retired, once said to me, "Why don't you and your colleagues (fellow Bishops) join with us (politicians) in making life better for people? Religion, after all, does not help them very much," He displayed an extraordinary ignorance - shared by tens of thousands of others - of what the Church is all about, of what its purpose and mission is.

It is this ignorance, or inadequate understanding, even within Church membership itself, that has prompted this video statement by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. Not that it attempts a comprehensive presentation of the Church's life and mission, but it does try to establish some balance and a right perspective. Faith, doctrine, church, salvation, hierarchy, etc. all have their proper place and necessary relationship to mission, but the Church is not just about souls, worship, and the next life. The Church is concerned with the whole person, body and soul, and about justice and peace and happiness and fulfilment in this life as well.

The Church's mission is Christ's mission, and Christ's mission was articulated centuries before by the prophet Isaiah: "He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken, to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison." (Is 61,1) And the echo in Christ's own words: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink: I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." (Mt.25, 35-36)

But words are cheap, even for the Church. What the video sets out to do is to show that the Church is practising what it preaches, and desires to practise more and more. Not only that - the Church is people, and these people, thousands of them at their own levels and in their own committed and unassuming ways are carrying the mission forward. It has not been entrusted solely to me and my colleagues!

The cassette features three individuals, Lyn a woman active in her parish, and working with great love and sensitivity with refugees; Eddie, an Aborigine, with great good humour and profound wisdom building bridges between his people and white Australians; and Patricia, a religious sister working internationally for the banning of land-mines. What they all have in common is their sheer goodness and concern for other human beings.

Eddie is not a Catholic, and his inclusion here speaks subtly and powerfully of ecumenism and a humanity that we all have in common. Lyn reminds us that everybody has the capacity to contribute to the Church's mission; Eddie reminds us that the Church's mission is not in all aspects exclusive to the Church, but can be shared by all people of good-will; and Patricia reminds us that there are occasions when we must enter the political arena and participate in national and international fora to further the Church's mission and improve the lot of the human family. I would defy anybody to watch this video and not be immensely encouraged by it. The mass media bring us bad news every day - family breakdown, violence, unemployment, financial crises on a global scale, famine, war and rumours of war. It can all be very depressing. Lyn, Eddie, and Patricia are all good news: they open a window on a very different reality, and they serve to remind us that there are countless others like them in our world. The video cannot but lift our hearts, fill them with hope, and restore our beleaguered faith in human nature. Above all, it will challenge us. It will give us, for the first time perhaps, a real understanding of the Church's mission, remind us that the Church's mission is our This cassette has the potential to achieve much good in the community, to motivate people of all faiths and none. It does not speak only to Catholics. It is called "Faces" and the faces of Lyn, Eddie, and Patricia

will radiate joy-in-giving for all who watch them as they speak to us from their hearts. I would like to pay a special tribute to the Catholic Mission Office and to our Media people, and to thank them for putting this video together with such professional competence. I thank Bruce Dynan the Director and Producer and the Committee that assisted him. Above all, do I thank Lyn, Eddie, and Patricia for the inspiration of their lives. I now have much pleasure in launching this video, and I hope you will all enjoy it and appreciate its message. I hope, too, that my politician friend will get to see it.