



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Plenary Council, child protection recurring themes for Ad Limina visit

Media Release

June 26, 2019

The Australian bishops have commenced a series of meetings with departments of the Holy See by visiting the influential Congregations for Bishops and for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The bishops are in Rome for their *Ad Limina Apostolorum* pilgrimage, which commenced on Monday with Mass at the tomb of St Peter and a two-and-a-half-hour conversation with Pope Francis – St Peter’s successor.

Bishop Greg O’Kelly SJ led the delegation to the Congregation for Bishops on Tuesday. The Bishop of Port Pirie, who is also serving as Apostolic Administrator of Adelaide, said ongoing preparations for the Plenary Council and the appointment process for bishops were among the topics discussed.

Bishop O’Kelly said it had been a fruitful meeting, with the bishops feeling they received “a good hearing” and that the Congregation for Bishops’ officials had sought to understand the contemporary context for the Catholic Church in Australia.

In the meeting with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith later that day, the Australian bishops raised a number of important issues, including efforts to protect human life and government attempts to remove the seal of Confession in some Australian jurisdictions.

The implementation of Pope Francis’ recent *motu proprio*, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, addressing the Church’s handling of child sexual abuse, was also discussed.

The bishops have also met with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, in what was described as a productive exchange with a clear focus on providing better solutions to both preventing child sexual abuse and improving strategies to accompany survivors of abuse.

“One of the things that was very obvious was the paramount need to care for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and to do everything we can to try to help them heal and move forward,” Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB said.

Archbishop Costelloe said the Pontifical Commission has commenced a program to work more closely with survivors to develop responses to child sexual abuse that draw upon best practice techniques from around the world.

He added that the Commission understood that the Catholic Church in Australia has been working to eliminate the “terrible scourge” of child sexual abuse and had been responding to the crisis for many years, so could have lessons for the Church in other countries.

Delegations of Australian bishops have already met with officials from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation, the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts and the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Many of the topics raised during the bishops’ meeting with Pope Francis on Monday will continue to be explored in the coming days with the relevant departments of the Holy See.

The *Ad Limina* visit continues until Friday, June 28.