



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### **Plenary News Briefs May 2004**

#### **Eucharistic focus for Bishops' Plenary Meeting**

Australia's Bishops have taken up Pope John Paul's call to tackle secularism in Australian society and to encourage the observance of the Sunday Mass, with discussions at their Plenary Meeting focusing on a broad renewal and education with regard to the Eucharist.

In an interview with Vatican Radio at the close of the May Plenary session, ACBC President, Archbishop Francis Carroll said the meeting had been infused with the spirit of the Bishops' recent Ad Limina visit to Rome.

"Certainly the memory and even the spirit of the Ad Limina visit was very much with us," he said.

"I think we were still celebrating somewhat the encouragement and the pleasure we got from the Ad Limina visit and the meeting with the Holy Father and so-forth. So it was certainly very much part of our meeting, particularly when we spoke about liturgical matters."

One important outcome of the Plenary meeting was a decision by the Bishops to issue a pastoral letter on the Eucharist, together with other associated pastoral activities.

"We had very much in mind the Holy Father's speaking particularly to the observance of the Lord's Day and so, generally speaking, it was against that background, I suppose, of trying to combat the secularism in Australian society that many of our discussions were held," Archbishop Carroll said.

The Vatican's recent Instruction on the Observance of the Eucharist was also considered, he said.

"We see consideration of that as part of the wider area of the liturgy," he said. "We looked at the proposed translation for the new Missal and so-forth, particularly centering on the Eucharist.

"We're trying to give a broad renewal and education in regard to the Eucharist, which of course includes things mentioned in the Instruction."

## **New pastoral document to promote participation in parish life for people with disability**

Australia's Bishops have signed off on an inspiring new pastoral document aimed at promoting the participation of people with a disability in parish life.

Entitled, "I Have a Story", the document has been prepared by the Family Working Group of the Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life.

Members of the Working Group, Glenn and Trish Mowbray of Canberra, addressed the Bishops during their May Plenary Meeting and told of the many challenges in parish life felt by families who have members with disability.

"We are very passionate about the participation of people with a disability in the Church, which has grown out of our own experiences as a family," Glenn said.

"Our three sons have Down syndrome and our daughter, although having been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, has grown into a beautiful young lady and her disability has little effect on her life. Our children bring us great joy every day, but not without many challenges."

Among those challenges was the disappointment of wanting to educate their children at Catholic schools, but having to attend government schools at different stages because the Catholic system could not cater for their needs. The reception of the Sacraments was another challenging time.

"At every occasion of our children reaching the age of receiving the Sacraments, we were faced with the reality that we needed to teach the sacramental class so that our own children could receive the Sacrament," Trish said.

The pastoral document, promoting opportunities for people with disability and their families to participate in parish life, was born from their own experiences and from the heartwarming and sometimes heartbreaking stories gathered via a survey of parishes throughout Australia.

"'I Have a Story' is aimed at parish communities," Glenn said. "The main aim of this project is to affirm, inform and assist parishes in implementing strategies for full participation of people with disability and their families in the life of the parish.

"The document gives some insight into disability and society and then moves into some practical suggestions for parishes to create opportunities for people with disability and their families to participate."

The Bishops warmly approved the document and thanked Glenn and Trish and the other members of the working party, Sr Jeanie Heiningher of Wollongong, Sr Veronica Hoey of Melbourne and Ms Trish Murdoch of Brisbane, for their work and the personal inspiration they provide.

"I have a Story" will be officially launched and distributed to parishes later this year.

## **Peace be with you – 2004 Social Justice Statement**

“Peace be with you – and also with you”. As Catholics we hear and say these words every time we go to Mass. But how do we bring this peace to our hearts and to our world?

This year’s Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Sunday Statement explores that question under the title “Peace be with you – Cultivating a Culture of Peace”.

Anchoring itself firmly in Christ’s gift of peace to us, the 2004 Statement goes on to ask what Australians can do to cultivate a culture of peace.

It acknowledges that “a culture of peace begins within our own hearts, spreads to our own households and then our communities before it can become an entrenched fact of the larger society’s life”.

The Statement will be launched in September prior to Social Justice Sunday on September 26.

It will be circulated on the Internet and to diocesan newspapers. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council will commence taking orders for hard copies of the Statement during July.

## **National Liturgical Commission Executive Officer re-appointed**

The ACBC has re-appointed Fr Peter Williams as the Executive Officer of the National Liturgical Commission.

The Bishops appointed Fr Peter, a priest of the Parramatta Diocese, to the Liturgical Commission post for a further three year term.

The National Liturgical Commission exists to help people understand the liturgy and celebrate it well. It works with the Bishops’ Committee for Liturgy, acting as its executive and research arm, undertaking projects it sets, and making proposals of liturgical needs to the Committee.

Through Fr Peter, the Commission acts as an agency of communication with diocesan coordinators or commissions for liturgy.

It also responds to and cooperates with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy in its work of preparing editions of the official liturgical books for the English-speaking world, and is responsible for the checking and publication of liturgical books for the Catholic Church in Australia.

Fr Peter has been involved in coordinating the responses of Australia’s Bishops to a new draft translation of the Order of Mass prepared by the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL).

The Bishops voted at the Plenary meeting to resubmit the draft to ICEL with the Bishops’ comments and the responses of the many people they had consulted, including experts in Latin, music and pastoral liturgy.

## **Australia's Ukrainian Catholic Eparch heads committee for new Catechism**

The Eparch for Ukrainian Catholics in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, Bishop Peter Stasiuk is heading the international committee which is writing a Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Bishop Stasiuk reported to the ACBC Plenary Meeting that the Catechism would be totally original.

“The Catechism, which will be completed in two or three years, will be a complete depository of our Ukrainian Catholic spirituality, theology and heritage,” Bishop Stasiuk said in his report.

“It will speak from one part of the Eastern Lung of the Universal Catholic Church.

“It is of great importance that this Catechism will be published at the very time when so many of the Eastern Catholic Churches are taking to heart the encouragement of our Holy Father, as expressed in *Oriente Lumen*, to rediscover and live fully their spiritual heritage.”

The Ukrainian Catholic Church has had a presence in Australia since the arrival of Ukrainian refugees and the first Ukrainian Catholic priest, Rev. Pavlo Smal in 1949.

Bishop Stasiuk expressed his appreciation for the support and good will of the ACBC and of all Australian Catholics.

“As a Church, we continue to pray for greater unity amongst our Churches,” he said. “We humbly seek the continuing help of your prayers. Please be assured of our prayers for your well-being.”

## **Women's Commission reports priorities for next three years**

The Commission for Australian Catholic Women has identified interfaith relations as a key part of its program for the next three years.

CACW Chairperson, Geraldine Hawkes, outlined four priority areas for the Commission in her report to the Bishops' Plenary meeting.

The priorities are:

- 1) CACW to continue to develop and maintain communication links and appropriate partnerships with the formal structures of the Catholic Church in Australia at both diocesan and national level.
- 2) CACW to continue to inform, engage and develop partnerships with individuals and groups through its communication channels and promotional work.
- 3) CACW to facilitate the participation of young Catholic women in the life and mission of the Church, particularly through Interfaith Relations at the national and international level.

4) CACW to develop processes and resources on successful practice in promoting the participation of women in the life and mission of the Church particularly through interfaith relations.

The Bishops commended Mrs Hawkes on the Commission's interfaith initiatives and reappointed the CACW's Executive Officer, Therese Vassarotti, for a term of two years.