



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops' annual Social Justice Statement focuses on mental health

Media Release

August 3, 2020

The Catholic bishops of Australia have released the Social Justice Statement 2020-21, on the critical subject of mental health, in the lead-up to Social Justice Sunday on August 30.

The Statement, ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, encourages faith communities, governments and individuals to make mental health a priority.

Bishop Terry Brady, Bishop Delegate for Social Justice on the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, has called on all Catholics to take up the message and challenges of the Statement.

“This is a timely message in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is affecting many members of our parishes, schools and communities,” Bishop Brady said.

“The personal feelings of anxiety and despair we all share at this time provide an opportunity to become more aware and active in fostering the mental health of all. Understanding mental health will help us to be aware of those who most need our support.”

The Statement encourages parishes and local communities to be places of welcome and inclusion, overcoming the barriers and stigma often faced by people experiencing mental ill-health. It demands the commitment of governments and policy-makers to prevent so many people falling through the cracks of the mental health system.

It also calls for the nation’s commitment to address those policies that exacerbate the already precarious circumstances of First Australians and refugees and asylum-seekers.

“Our society tends to push away or draw away from those who confront us with our frailties and limitations. This is not the way of Jesus,” Bishop Brady said.

“Let us follow him in drawing near to those who are experiencing mental ill-health and acknowledge that they are members of the Body of Christ – ‘they’ are part of ‘us’. Only then can we say ‘we are all in this together’. Only then can we ‘live life to the full’.”

In addition to the written statement, which is free to download, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference’s Office for Social Justice has also produced an audio recording of the statement. Prayer cards are available to download and liturgical resources will be available for parishes to mark Social Justice Sunday on August 30.

“I commend this Statement to every parish, school and Church network and invite you to promote it as widely as possible,” Bishop Brady said.

The 2020-2021 Social Justice Statement, ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, can be downloaded from the Office for Social Justice website: http://bit.ly/SocialJustice_2020