

# **Bishops Commission for Church Ministry & National Council of Priests of Australia**

**Thursday 23 February 2017**

## **Bishops Commission for Church Ministry**



**Chairman: Bishop Peter Ingham**  
**Members: Archbishop Mark Coleridge**  
**Bishop Michael McCarthy**  
**Bishop Patrick O'Regan**  
**Bishop Leslie Tomlinson**  
**Bishop William Wright**

## **NCP Executive**



**Chairman: Father James Clarke**  
**Members: Father Wayne Bendotti**  
**Father Bonefasius Buahendri SVD**  
**Father Mark Freeman**  
**Father Paddy Sykes**

## The Royal Commission

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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse continues to haunt us. This month's Catholic wrap up is particularly distressing because it is highlighting the extent of the criminal behaviour of clergy within our Church. Our people are the subject of derision and ridicule. The priesthood is held up to be a profession for paedophiles and degenerates. One of the unintended consequences of the Royal Commission is that it has condoned anti-Catholicism as the last legitimate prejudice left in Australia.

In our press release, the executive of the N.C.P. declared our support for the initiatives of the Bishops of Australia in their endeavours to eradicate the scourge of sexual abuse which is a blight on our Church. We wish to reiterate our support for you and assure you of our prayers during this time of trial.

The effect on clergy morale is palpable. However, we believe that we will come through this trial strengthened in our resolve to be a more compassionate Church.

### Questions we have for the bishops:

- *Will there be an investigation into the cultural factors which contributed to the sexual abuse crisis?*
- *Will the bishops implement the recommendations of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council?*

## Overseas Priests Ministering in our Dioceses

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There is a frustration amongst priests who have overseas assistant priests working with them in parish ministry. The anecdotal evidence we are receiving is that among the priests from the Sub-Continent, the priests from Sri Lanka are more responsive to the cultural diversity of the Australian Church. Whereas the priests from India are less responsive and more inclined to revert to their default position of being the authoritarian parish priest when given their own parish. There is a negative response to priests from Nigeria.

## The Possibility of Married Priests

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The N.C.P. while affirming the traditional model of priesthood, believes that it is time to look at the possibility of ordaining suitable married men for Eucharistic ministry. We are recommending that the pool of candidates for priesthood be widened to include suitable married men and that the possibility of returning priests to active ministry who have left ministry to marry be considered. The Executive of the N.C.P. are cognizant of the pressures with which our bishops are faced.

- *We invite you to share with us your thoughts or recommendations on how to improve clergy morale, and how to improve the relationship between bishops and priests.*
- *We also invite suggestions from the bishops on how the N.C.P. can help in the preparation for the upcoming Plenary Council in 2020.*

## **ACCRAF – Australian Catholic Clergy Remuneration Assistance Fund**

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The N.C.P. continues to manage ACCRAF on behalf of the A.C.B.C. The new Chairman is Fr Greg Trythall, Parish Priest of Williamstown in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, assisted by Fr Matthew Digges (Diocese of Broome – representing the recipient dioceses) and Fr Mark Franklin (Archdiocese of Brisbane – representing the contributing dioceses).

In the year ending 31/12/2016 ACCRAF distributed \$153,624.80 in funds. The Diocese of Broome Priests Support Fund received \$133,624.80 and the Diocese of Port Pirie received \$20,000.00.

- *(See three separate reports – Balance Sheet as at 31/12/2016, Profit & Loss as at 31/12/2016 and Summary of Contributions Received 2008-2016.*

To date in 2017, \$69,465.60 has been paid to Broome.

ACCRAF relies on the support of donations from individual priests and from the dioceses of Australia.

## **The Official Directory**

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The N.C.P. continues to publish *The Official Directory of The Catholic Church in Australia*. We consider this publication an invaluable resource which we endeavour to make available to all dioceses, parishes, schools and Catholic agencies throughout the nation.

The N.C.P. Executive is proud of this publication which is published on your behalf as a service to the Church and acknowledges the hard work and dedication of our Secretariat, Ms Sally Heath and Mrs Christine Moore.

We encourage individual bishops to promote the use of *The Directory* within their dioceses.