



Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania

Press Release from the Assembly of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania Suva, August 2006

The Catholic Bishops from the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Australia met as a Federation from 7-11 August in Suva, Fiji. Previously they had met in 2002 in Rabaul, PNG, in Rome during the Synod for Oceania in 1998, in Auckland in 1994 and in Sydney in 1990.

The Bishops received a warm welcome from the Fijian people, which included a solemn welcoming ceremony. At the opening Mass, the Federation Chair, Bishop Denis Browne, noted the diversity of the Church throughout the region and called on the Spirit of God to make the Church more faithful, more hopeful and more loving.

A range of topics surfaced in the discussion, such as greater sharing of resources within the Federation and better communication between the Bishops' Conferences, the Church presenting the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ as an alternative to secular ideologies, pastoral care for people in remote areas, and HIV and AIDS. The Bishops voiced great concern about climate change and its implications for the low-lying islands of the Pacific.

World Youth Day 2008 was a particular focus of attention. Bishops and their diocesan teams will be working together to ensure that the youth of Oceania offer a fitting welcome to the youth of the world in July 2008. During the two years leading up to the World Youth Day, the Church will focus on the evangelisation of youth and ways that youth can feel more at "home" in the church. The Bishops are particularly concerned about how to use media and appropriate language to lead young people to a personal relationship with Christ.

Despite the diversity of the Church throughout the region, Bishops found common concern in the way secular ideologies have had a significant impact on society in Australia and New Zealand, but are also affecting Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and the Pacific communities. They also found common concern in the promotion of vocations throughout the region. The Bishops see growth in good vocations to priesthood, permanent diaconate and religious life as part of an overall renewal of the church.

Bishop Peter Ingham of Wollongong, Australia, was elected President of the Federation for the next four years, and Archbishop Anthony Apuron OFM Cap of Guam was elected Vice-President. The other members of the FCBCO Executive Committee are Archbishop John Dew (New Zealand), Bishop Michel Visi (Vanuatu), Bishop Alphonse Chaupa (Papua New Guinea), Bishop Chris Cardone OP (Solomon Islands), Bishop Christopher Prowse (Australia), Bishop Robin Leamy SM (New Zealand).