



Remain in my love
Jn 15:9

4-5 February 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Over a three week period commencing on 6 February 2017 the Royal Commission will hold a public hearing to inquire into the current policies and procedures of Catholic Church authorities in Australia in relation to child-protection and child-safety standards, including responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.

You can expect various cases that have been highlighted by the media will be analysed, statistics about the extent of abuse will be made public, and the way forward will be explored. Many of our Bishops and other Catholic leaders will appear before the Royal Commission.

They may well be asked to explain what the Church has been doing to address the needs of those who suffered abuse and/or harm in the past; what has been done to change the culture that allowed abuse to occur; and, what actions have been taken to put in place new policies, structures and protections to safeguard children. As a result of this examination, the Church will have to consider matters raised and/or recommended by the Royal Commission.

We sincerely regret the damage that has been done in the past to the lives of victims of sexual abuse. However, you need not be disheartened by resultant adverse criticism as the Church's commitment to improve and provide a safe environment for all who engage with us is steadfast. This can be demonstrated by the positive steps that have been taken to address past failings; and, is reinforced by Pope Francis' recent call for a "zero tolerance" towards sex crimes against children and the condemnation of all perpetrators including those among the clergy as well as those who cover up such atrocities.

Yours sincerely

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