



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops to entrust Australia to Mary Help of Christians

Media Release

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As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect Australians' lives, including their worship, the Catholic bishops will entrust the country to the care of Mary Help of Christians on her feast day next week.

In a message issued today as "A word of encouragement to the Catholic people of Australia", the bishops noted that the country "has certainly suffered because of the pandemic, but not as grievously as some other countries".

"For that we thank God and we congratulate public health authorities and governments on their prompt and prudent responses," the bishops wrote.

"Australians in general have also shown the solidarity and good sense, the generosity and kindness needed in such a time. In our healthcare workers particularly we have seen an exceptional spirit of self-sacrifice, and for that we are all grateful."

The bishops also acknowledge the role that churches and other religious communities have played, which has included the suspension of public worship and the closure of places of worship.

"This has been a real deprivation, and the bishops understand not only your anxiety about the virus and shutdown but more especially your deep desire to return to the sacraments and to resume public worship," they wrote.

"There is a real hunger in this. It is something we all feel, and we long for the time when our hunger will be satisfied as together we return to the feast of the Lord."

The letter reflects on the message of the Easter season, saying while there is "no room for complacency" as Australia appears to emerge from the worst of the pandemic, "there is certainly room for the hope that Easter brings to birth".

The bishops urged the faithful to continue to adhere to government and medical advice, noting the collaboration between those authorities and Catholic leaders to support the re-opening of churches and the staged resumption of public worship.

The bishops approved the entrustment of the country to Mary Help of Christians during this week's plenary meeting, conducted using videoconference technology.

The motion read: "That the Australian Bishops entrust Australia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary under the title Our Lady Help of Christians, seeking her intercession for the safety of all our people especially in this time of COVID-19 pandemic."

Mary Help of Christians has been the official patroness of Australia since 1844. Her feast day is celebrated on May 24, which this year coincides with the Feast of the Ascension. The entrustment of Australia to Mary Help of Christians can therefore take place on the 24th or the 25th, the bishops agreed.