



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### World Communications Day highlights importance of listening

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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Thanks to the journey of the Plenary Council, the People of God in Australia are well placed to respond to Pope Francis' exhortation to be people who listen, Australian Catholic Media Council chair Debra Vermeer says.

[Pope Francis' message for World Communications Day](#), which is celebrated in Australia on May 22 this year, has the theme "Listening with the ear of your heart".

In his message, the Pope speaks of the temptation to speak without listening, as well as the tendency to hear people speaking but not actually listen to them.

"What specifically makes communication good and fully human is listening to the person in front of us, face to face, listening to the other person whom we approach with fair, confident and honest openness," he wrote.

"The lack of listening, which we experience so often in daily life, is unfortunately also evident in public life, where, instead of listening to each other, we often 'talk past one another'."

Mrs Vermeer said the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, and its stages of listening and dialogue and listening and discernment in particular, has sought to bring Catholics into a space of deeper and prayerful listening.

"That has been accomplished through listening to that which stirs within us, listening to each other and listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit," she said.

"Now in its 56th year, the papal message for World Communications Day has always been challenging and in an age when everyone can act as a broadcaster, this call to be people who listen is timely and necessary."

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge, in his homily at the start of this month's bishops' plenary meeting, reflected on the importance of listening.

"In recent times we have heard a good deal about the need to listen, and rightly so," he said.

"At the heart of Scripture we hear the call *Shema* Israel, 'Listen Israel' (Deut 6:4); the first word of the West's most influential text, the Rule of St Benedict, is *Ausculata*, 'Listen'; and 'listening' is the word Pope Francis set at the head of his seminal speech on synodality in 2015."

The call to listen, Archbishop Coleridge said, "has also echoed through the years of our own Plenary Council journey as we have sought to 'listen to what the Spirit is saying' (Rev 2:7)".

"A Church that has often been more used to speaking than listening has to give the tongue a rest and open the ear in new ways," he said.

Mrs Vermeer encouraged Catholics to reflect on and pray with Pope Francis' message and to consider the ways in which Jesus offered a model of listening in various Gospel passages.

The Australian Catholic Media Council has prepared a series of social media tiles to highlight Pope Francis' message. It has also provided homily notes for the Sixth Sunday of Easter prepared by Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ, a long-time contributor to Catholic media in Australia.

The resources can be found at: [\[LINK TO BE INSERTED\]](#)