



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

21 November 2011

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you on behalf of all the Bishops of Australia, giving thanks to God for your faith and witness. We now share with you a message of hope.

We call the Catholic people in Australia to a **Year of Grace**, to span the time from Pentecost 2012 to Pentecost 2013. Like the disciples at the first Pentecost, we commit ourselves to **start afresh from Christ**.

For several years the Bishops have been reflecting deeply on the life of the Church in Australia. We have asked how we can better serve the needs of you, God's faithful people, in bringing the peace and good news of Jesus Christ to our nation.

Pope Benedict XVI has also proclaimed a **Year of Faith** for the whole Church, to begin on 11 October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. We are confident that, with grace leading to faith, and faith responding to grace, the Year of Faith and our Year of Grace will complement each other.

We recognise, firstly, God's abundant blessings to us. You will know many of these in your own lives. We have seen them, too, in large public celebrations such as World Youth Day in Sydney and the Canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

We also acknowledge with sadness that we are a Church in need of healing. There are many wounds – most especially the wounds of abuse which have left not only those abused but the whole Church in need of healing. There is also the struggle to defend the dignity of the first Australians and those who come as migrants and refugees to our shores. We need to extend the hand of friendship to those of other nations and faiths and to be good stewards of the created world. Most deeply, we desire for the light of Christ to burn more brightly in the heart of each Australian.

As Bishops, we asked ourselves where we can turn with so many issues confronting us. Our response in faith is to **start afresh from Christ**. We make this call, firstly and most urgently, to ourselves as Bishops. We are resolved, in the words of Pope John Paul II, to **contemplate the face of Christ**. Both these phrases come from his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte (At the Beginning of the New Millennium)*, and we use this Letter as our guide and inspiration.

As we address this challenge to ourselves, we invite you to walk this journey with us in hope.

We commit ourselves to pray daily, seeking the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

We commit ourselves to repent for the areas in which we have failed, individually and together, seeking healing and renewal through the grace of Christ's forgiveness.

We commit ourselves to the path of holiness, cultivating the many gifts of the Spirit and seeking to grow as disciples of Jesus.

We entrust this year to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and through this renewed commitment, we are confident that the Church in Australia will be transformed by the power of Christ's resurrection in our lives.

Planning has already begun in every diocese in the country, so that the Catholics of this nation may respond to this fresh invitation to "**contemplate the face of Christ**".

We invite you to join us in this journey of prayer so that this "Pentecost" year will be for our nation and all Australians truly a "year of grace".

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Philip Wilson .". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Archbishop Philip E Wilson
President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference