



THE ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

28 March 2013

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

In these Easter days, we see more clearly and celebrate more joyfully the fundamental reason for Christian rejoicing: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Yet Christian joy is inevitably touched by the sadness of this world which can leave us with a heavy heart. A major cause of this sadness has been the revelations of sexual abuse in society and within the Church, which has led to the establishment of the Royal Commission into abuse within institutions.

The Church has welcomed the Royal Commission and has pledged full co-operation. It is not only the Catholic Church that will be in the spotlight; other religious communities and government and non-government institutions will also face the confronting truth about the abuse and about how society – and the Church – has responded so poorly to what has happened.

In the time ahead, we will be grieved and sorely challenged by much that the Royal Commission will bring to light. Yet the truth must be known as far as possible, however upsetting this may be. As a community, we need to confront without a trace of denial or defensiveness the truth of both the abuse and our response to it.

As I said to the clergy last year, the only way forward now is to face the full horror of what has happened, and to do so humbly and courageously as a people of faith. We can never forget that the deepest hurt has been suffered by those abused and their families. As a Church, we commit ourselves to do all that we can not only to bring the truth to light but also to bring justice and healing to those who have been abused.

The Archdiocese, as well as other Catholic organisations, including schools may be asked to provide to the Royal Commission a wide range of documents, including those regarding an allegation or complaint of sexual abuse of a child. It is essential that any such records (whether printed or electronic) be retained.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has established the Truth, Justice and Healing Council to coordinate the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission across the nation, since a coordinated engagement will be fundamentally important. The Council, of which I am one of two Bishop members, has already begun its work and will soon have its first meeting. In the Archdiocese of Brisbane, I am wholly committed to working with the Council and indeed the Commission to uncover systematic institutional failures in the area of child protection, to promote healing for the survivors of abuse, and to identify and implement measures required to prevent the abuse of the young in the future.

As we look to all that lies ahead, we continue to pray:

That the Royal Commission will help the Church and the whole of society to know the truth, to do what justice requires and to bring healing to the many wounded by sexual abuse.

The Most Reverend Mark Coleridge

GPO Box 5238, Brisbane Qld 4001 Australia

Telephone +61 7 3131 5500 archbishop@bne.catholic.net.au Facsimile +61 7 3358 1357