



We proclaim a crucified Christ
1Cor1.23

Saturday 20 February 2016

Message from Most Rev Peter A Comensoli to the People of Broken Bay

My dear sisters and brothers of the Diocese of Broken Bay,

In a pluralist and democratic society, the media exercises a most important role. It holds public officials and institutions to account. It brings to light vested interests and corrupt behaviour. The legitimate scrutiny of the media on the Church has been a critical part of the journey we have had to undertake, both to recognise and to address the darkness of sexual abuse within our community. Over the past week, the Church generally – and Cardinal Pell individually – has once again been at the fore of media attention.

Though the media is an important instrument of accountability, it is also ripe for manipulation by persons whose agenda may not be simply the search for truth. Then media becomes used as a forum of insinuation and, ultimately, of intimidation. It does not serve the common good, but rather introduces into society a sophisticated form of bullying from which it becomes difficult to defend the right to a person's good name and integrity.

Sadly, we have seen this occurring over the past week. The critically important work of the Royal Commission is not progressed when accusations are flaunted without proper demonstration. The media must not replace the Commission as the forum in which scrutiny and accountability are exercised. In this regard, I am deeply concerned that the sober pursuit of the truth and the attentive care of persons are being overwhelmed by recklessness, which can only result in damaging both the good of individuals and the common good.

Moreover, it is difficult to understand how the pain of those who have experienced hurt in the Church through sexual abuse can be truly healed when such a relentless campaign to discredit is engaged. If we are genuinely committed as a society to address the pain of those who suffer such terrible wounds, then we will enter the questions that need addressing with proper diligence and care, and not through a frenzy of insinuation.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Bishop of Broken Bay



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Ours is a faith that seeks to stand on the side of the dignity of each person, by coming to the aid of those who are harmed by evil and criminal acts and by affirming the fundamental right to natural justice in mercy. I acknowledge we have not always acted in accordance with this belief. For this reason we must constantly come before the Cross and learn again from the mystery of suffering.

I seek to stand on the side of those sexually abused by priests and others in the Catholic Church, and who have been further devastated by Church leaders who failed to hear their cries. I also seek to stand on the side of every person's right to a fair and proper process being undertaken before a person's name is tarnished, including Cardinal Pell.

There are many in our society and in our own Diocese who are working hard, often behind the scenes, to build a safe culture and Church for all our people. I want to acknowledge and thank them. But this is a work shared by all of us – clergy and people – who have responsibility for the care of children and vulnerable people.

For some months now, I have been working towards an opportunity for our Diocesan family to gather in prayer with and for those who have suffered abuse at the hands of priests, religious and other Church workers, to express before our merciful God our lament and solidarity. The date set aside for this moment of prayer is the evening of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday 3 June. At the end of this week in which questions have arisen about what genuinely assists the course of truth and the good of persons, I now commend this to you.

May this be our common task, done for the good of those who suffer, and marked by the unique example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Bishop of Broken Bay
