

LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP HART



Archdiocese of Melbourne, Media and Communications Office – February 3, 2017

A letter from Archbishop Denis Hart

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write to you as the final hearing involving the Catholic Church at the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse commences in Sydney on 6 February 2017. The hearing is expected to conclude at the end of February.

For the victims and survivors, for the Catholic community and for many in the wider Australian community, this hearing may be a difficult and even distressing time, as the Royal Commission reviews the evidence it has already received and seeks to understand why and how this evil occurred.

Deeply mindful of the hurt and pain caused by abuse, I once again offer my apology on behalf of the Catholic Church. I am sorry for the damage that has been done to the lives of victims of sexual abuse. As Pope Francis said recently, 'it is a sin that shames us'.

Over the next three weeks, evidence presented during the Royal Commission hearings will be analysed, statistics about the extent of abuse will be made public, and the way forward will be explored. Many of our bishops and other Catholic leaders will appear before the Royal Commission. They will explain what the Church has been doing to change the old culture that allowed abuse to continue, to put in place new policies, structures and protections to safeguard children and vulnerable persons and to respond effectively when allegations of abuse are made.

Pope Francis has urged the whole Church to 'find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated'.

I join my commitment and that of the Archdiocese to that of Pope Francis to do all that is necessary in the Archdiocese to ensure that there is no repeat of these evil crimes.

Throughout the coming weeks, I want to assure the survivors and all those affected by abuse in the Archdiocese and all Catholics of my thoughts and prayers. I encourage you to turn in prayer to the one who is always ready to listen: Jesus Christ, who brings healing and hope.

With every good wish.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
† Denis Hart
Archbishop of Melbourne