



THE MOST REVEREND MARK COLERIDGE
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AS THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA SOLEMNLY INAUGURATES ITS FIFTH PLENARY COUNCIL, HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS SENDS CORDIAL GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES TO ALL, GATHERED FOR THIS SIGNIFICANT ECCLESIAL EVENT, WHICH REPRESENTS A SINGULAR "JOURNEYING TOGETHER" OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA ALONG THE PATHS OF HISTORY TOWARDS A RENEWED ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN CHRIST IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. HIS HOLINESS PRAYS THAT THE COUNCIL MAY BE A GRACED OCCASION FOR MUTUAL LISTENING AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT, MARKED BY PROFOUND COMMUNION WITH THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER, "THE PERPETUAL AND VISIBLE SOURCE AND FOUNDATION OF THE UNITY OF BOTH THE BISHOPS AND OF THE WHOLE COMPANY OF THE FAITHFUL" (LUMEN GENTIUM, 23). IN THIS CONCILIAR PROCESS, THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA IS CHALLENGED TO LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT AND TO BEAR RENEWED WITNESS TO THE PERENNIAL TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL AND TO DEVELOP NEW AND CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF EVANGELICAL CHARITY. IN THIS WAY, BUILDING ON THE SOLID FOUNDATIONS LAID BY PAST GENERATIONS, IT WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY A HOME WITH OPEN DOORS, "A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES, A SANCTUARY WHERE THE THIRSTY COME TO DRINK IN THE MIDST OF THEIR JOURNEY, AND A CENTRE OF CONSTANT MISSIONARY OUTREACH" (EVANGELII GAUDIUM, 28). WITH GREAT AFFECTION, THE HOLY FATHER ENTRUSTS ALL TAKING PART IN THE COUNCIL TO THE INTERCESSION OF MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH, AND WILLINGLY IMPARTS HIS APOSTOLIC BLESSING AS A PLEDGE OF PEACE AND JOY IN JESUS, HER DIVINE SON.

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