

A Conversation with Bishop Vincent Long

Tuesday 8th October 2019, Fr Gerry, Jan and Peter Sheehan flew to Parramatta to have a private meeting with Bishop Vincent Long. The following is an account of the meeting;

Told by Fr Gerry:

We went to Bishop Vincent Long to give him encouragement in his often repeated statements of church reform and thank him for his leadership and courage.

We achieved our aims and came away feeling heartened and empowered ourselves.

Vincent had with him a copy of our Joint Parishes Statement agreed on by 27 parishes in Melbourne. He immediately congratulated and thanked us. "This is beautifully and clearly written", he said.

Vincent went on to suggest we could possibly be stronger on the role of women in the Church. "It's a matter of justice", he emphasised a number of times. "Women do the hard labour in the fields of justice, homeless, marginalised, refugees, human trafficking etc. We take it for granted but don't give women the authority in the Church. It is unjust," he said emphatically.

"What a great opportunity we have here in Australia; of all countries we have been hit the hardest. The Australian Church is at its lowest ever. We have 1000's all over the country calling for change. Has this ever happened before? Yes, there are loads of people walking away and people who have given up hope of reform, you can't stop that, but you can't reform unless you are in it." Bishop Vincent Long goes on.

"Now is the time for religions to work together. The joint statement might need to emphasise that a little more", he said.

He rolled his eyes at my suggestion that the language of the present liturgy is archaic and out of touch. "Other countries Bishop Conferences have refused to go the Rome way, there is no reason why we can't change here in Australia." Bishop Vincent Long went on.

"Keep working together please. You are having an influence. It is more powerful to work together than individual parishes. The plenary Council will do only so much; diocese will do their bit and parishes will too."

He agreed with Peter that the church has lagged behind on climate change initiatives and this - in an era of Pope Francis & 'Laudato Si'. (translated - 'Praise be to you')