



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Catholic Church announces national drought prayer campaign

Media Release

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The Catholic Church in Australia is dedicating the month of November as a time to pray for those affected by crippling drought conditions and to pray for the gift of rain.

Parishes, schools, families and other Catholic communities across the country are being encouraged to participate in the National Prayer Campaign for Drought, which also invites people to provide assistance to those most in need.

The Bureau of Meteorology says that, on some measures, the current drought is the worst in 100 years or more, with most parts of Australia's eastern states declared to be in drought.

Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE from Wilcannia-Forbes oversees a diocese that covers about half of New South Wales, including some of the most drought-affected areas in the country.

He said the month of prayer is an additional response to the local work being done in affected communities.

"Some of our Catholic ministries, along with other faith-based, charitable and government organisations, are doing remarkable work, supporting people with material needs, offering financial support and responding to people's psychological and spiritual needs," Bishop Columba said.

"In some dioceses, practical responses like school fee relief or support with rising utility bills can ease an increasing burden for families.

"But in a Catholic context, prayer must be a part of our response."

Bishop Columba said the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, has stories of rain being "God's gift" to people who are suffering,

"In times of drought like we are experiencing now, we should pray for God's gift of rain, which will have the power to quench our arid lands and also lift many people's fallen spirits," he said.

Bishop Columba said the National Prayer Campaign must be truly national, noting that the whole country suffers when there is a drought – especially one of this magnitude. The Church needs to be an example of recognising that reality.

"That people living where there is plentiful, or at least enough, water don't seem aware of how much suffering the drought is causing only adds to the hardship of those in drought-affected communities," he said.

"The Church across Australia – lay people, religious, priests and bishops alike – needs to stand in solidarity with those suffering most acutely, offering prayers and practical support to those in most need."

Prayer resources have been developed for parishes, schools, communities and families to participate in the National Prayer Campaign. They can be accessed at www.catholic.org.au/drought