



**CANON LAW SOCIETY
OF
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Canon law conference reflects on contemporary challenges

Around 100 participants gathered in Adelaide recently for the 58th annual Conference of the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand (CLSANZ). Attendees came from Australia and New Zealand, as well as Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Canada, and Hong Kong.

The conference program featured presentations by Patrick O'Regan, Archbishop of Adelaide, who offered his reflections on the Australian Plenary Council and the recent Synod and their significance for the local Church. Dr Bernadette Tobin of the Plunkett Centre for Ethics explored the moral complexities of voluntary assisted dying legislation and the Church's response. Dr Michael Nobel, Professor of Canon Law at the University of St Paul, Ottawa, Canada, examined the concept of psychological incapacity as a ground for nullity of marital consent.

Fr Peter Slack of the Diocese of Lismore addressed the canonical implications for the Church's mission through the use of civil incorporation of Catholic entities such as schools, health, and social services. Fr Binh Le of the Archdiocese of Melbourne explored obligations and rights of clergy arising from incardination and the challenges the Church faces in incardinating priests from different cultures into the Australian Church.

Sue Rivett, from the Regional Tribunal of Adelaide, presented a workshop on the "good of spouses" (*bonum coniugum*) in marriage, and Sr Janette Murphy shared her experiences of supporting members of the deaf community who approach tribunals seeking nullity of their marriage. On the final morning, Dr John Doherty of the Archdiocese of Sydney presented a practicum on penal processes for those engaged in the penal law of the Church.

CLSANZ President Fr. Paul Clark said the conference was invaluable to our members and guests: "Our annual conference is an opportunity for those involved in the field of canon law to study and reflect together on issues that are both complex and pastoral. Over our few days together, there is the chance for members to meet, listen, and share our common wisdom on topics of interest in the Church today. This, in turn, assists us in our ministry and life, whether we are engaged in tribunal ministry, religious life, diocesan governance and administration, or in the mission of the Church more generally."

One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation of the CLSANZ Owen Oxenham Award to Monsignor Brendan Daly of Christchurch, New Zealand, in



recognition of his outstanding contribution to canon law. Msgr Daly is the Judicial Vicar for the Tribunal of the Catholic Church for New Zealand. He is a well-published author and an academic who lectures in canon law. He is also highly regarded for his work in the area of safeguarding in the Church.

The Society also honoured three members with life membership for their contribution to CLSANZ and to the ministry of canon law: Bishop Robert McGuckin, Bishop emeritus of Toowoomba; Sr Maria Casey, RSJ; and Msgr Brendan Daly.

The CLSANZ looks forward to its 59th Annual Conference in 2026, in Sydney, continuing its mission to support the mission of the Church through the study and application of canon law.

For more information: clsanz.catholic.org.au

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Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand

Pope John XXIII's 1959 announcement to hold an Ecumenical Council and revise Canon Law was the inspiration for envisioning a society to receive the teaching of the council and implement the revised Code of Canon Law. On 20 June 1967, The Canon Law Society of Australia was founded. The membership of the society embraces lay persons, clerics and religious. Presently in excess of 200, the members come from diverse nations and cultures especially across Oceania and South-East Asia. The society holds an annual conference to promote professional development and publishes academic journal, *The Canonist*, twice a year. For more information: clsanz.catholic.org.au