

Church Ministries walk the Easter Journey

Approaching Easter during the COVID-19 situation leads Catholic Health, Aged Care, Education and Social Services to identify, more than ever, with the suffering Christ.

Representatives of Australia's Ministerial Public Juridic Persons¹ (MPJP) met via videoconference on the Tuesday of Holy Week. The news from all sectors was of an unrelenting struggle interspersed with moments of creativity bringing hope.

There was a shared concern among canonical stewards (usually known as Trustees) for all people as they adjust to the new world. Close to MPJP hearts are the most vulnerable people they serve: frail older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those in rural locations, students with difficulties, refugees, homeless people and those with serious illness. These vulnerable people are acutely feeling the impact of social isolation, reduced services, and the anxiety concerning the real and imagined impacts of the pandemic.

Canonical stewards are also conscious of the heroic contribution of staff and volunteers who are working long days, under stress, learning new skills quickly, tackling new ways of working, and at times adapting work due to reduced/inadequate resources. It was noted that staff working from home are now often juggling the care needs of their home-bound family and their work commitments.

The MPJP videoconference also heard of creative uses of information technology to maintain supportive relationships between teachers and students, within aged care, in youth services and by staff with their peers.

All sectors are drawing on Catholic ethics as they grapple with ethical dilemmas such as how to allocate scarce resources to those with competing needs and how to adequately provide compassionate care at a distance.

Eva Skira, Chair of the Council of the Association of MPJPs (AMPJP) said:

"There is a strong sense of solidarity across all sectors - Health, Aged Care, Education and Social Services. We know that everyone is working harder than ever to continue their ministries under challenging circumstances."

"This Easter, Ministerial PJPs and their ministries will see themselves in Christ as he perseveres with God's mission even though the burden is extreme. We see the suffering Christ not just in those we serve but also in our staff."

"It is the prayer of Ministerial PJP canonical stewards that our people will maintain hope and be open to the support and new life that God will send – though probably in unexpected people, places and times."

For more information contact: Lawrie Hallinan, AMPJP: 0419 447 217; or visit: www.ampjps.org.au

¹ "Public Juridic Person" (PJP) is the term used in Canon Law for a corporate entity established within the Catholic Church, e.g. a diocese, parish. PJPs established for the specific purpose of operating Church ministries (e.g. health, education and social services) are often referred to as a Ministerial PJP.