

## MEDIA RELEASE

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*For immediate release*

### Strong lay formation the answer for an outward-looking Church

The training and formation of lay missionaries of the Church at all levels was high on the list of priorities for an international symposium in Rome recently, attended by Australian representatives on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

The symposium, themed “Promotion and Formation of the Laity: Best Practices”, was held over three days at the end of last month. Andrea Dean, Director of the Office for the Participation of Women, and Catholic Mission Deputy National Director Peter Gates were the Australian delegates.

The conference, run by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, brought representatives from around the world together to discuss the importance of lay formation – a timely and pertinent topic for the Church in Australia as the Plenary Council 2020 unfolds.

“It was a genuine experience of sharing the successes and struggles of the real world, the real Church, with those working for the Church in Rome,” said Ms Dean, whose office earlier this year launched the *Leadership for Mission* initiative, a graduate program for women run through the Australian Catholic University.

“As an Australian, I was very conscious of how young the Church is in this country and the modest number of Catholics here,” she said. “In contrast to the reports from other episcopal conferences, which highlighted large-scale, national formation programs, the ‘best practice’ examples that we chose to share were targeted and localised.”

A two-year program offering a sustained experience of mission, *Leadership for Mission* supports profound growth, said Ms Dean.

“Because the program includes the opportunity to share faith in community, connect theology and life, engage in mission and reflect on God’s presence in the everyday, the women become firm friends and true spiritual companions,” she said.

Mr Gates agreed that the Church in Australia was embracing lay formation for leadership in mission and through a wide range of ministries and vocations.

“The Plenary Council process is just one way the Church in Australia is encouraging broader participation and responding to Pope Francis’ call to be an outward-looking Church of inclusion, dialogue and encounter,” said Mr Gates.

Catholic Mission will next year jointly deliver the fourth “Mission: one heart many voices” conference with Catholic Religious Australia. With around 500 delegates expected, it has grown to be Australia’s premier conference on mission, delivering practical ways to live the joy of the Gospel and lead mission in professional and personal contexts.

For more information on *Leadership for Mission*, visit [www.opw.catholic.org.au](http://www.opw.catholic.org.au). To learn more about the ‘Mission: one heart many voices’ conference, head to [www.catholicmission.org.au/mohmv](http://www.catholicmission.org.au/mohmv).

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