



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Bishops celebrate memorial Mass for Pope Francis

Australia's Catholic bishops have celebrated a Mass in memory of the late Pope Francis during their May plenary.

Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Balvo, preached the homily and Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB celebrated the Mass, in the Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel in North Sydney.

Archbishop Balvo told the gathered bishops from all around Australia the late pope's selection of the name Francis in March 2013 was significant.

"When I heard that, I knew that this was going to be a very different papacy," he said.

In 1205, St Francis of Assisi received a call from the Lord to "rebuild the Church".

"I was just thinking to myself at that time in March 2013, when the sex abuse crisis was breaking out and there were so many other different things, that this Francis was called to repair the damage that had been done to the Church," Archbishop Balvo said.

He said it was an "unforgettable experience" to spend time with Pope Francis in Kenya in 2015.

Archbishop Balvo said he would never forget the time when he spent many months in hospital in 2018 and his mobile phone rang.

"At the other end was him (Pope Francis) calling me to say hello, to wish me the best and hope that I would get better ... you could imagine the impact it had on me."

Archbishop Balvo cited some of Pope Francis' words from his inaugural Mass homily of March 19, 2013 – the Solemnity of St Joseph.

"How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand," Pope Francis said.

"The vocation of being a 'protector' ... means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world ... protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about.

"It means caring for one another in our families ... building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts!"