

'Comfort my People' REFLECTIONS 7th April

Extracts from Archbishop Peter's letter to the Faithful of Melbourne.

Dear friends in Christ Jesus

The court proceedings involving Cardinal George Pell and the person identified through the Courts as 'J'... has been an intense and painful time ..., especially (for) all those personally involved in this case. (It) has been a hard road for all those whose wounds of abuse have been re-opened and laid bare— our relatives, friends and fellow travellers.

As a Christian disciple, I have striven to uphold the dignity of 'J' and Cardinal Pell throughout this time, both in my private thoughts and public statements. (cf. Mt 25:31-46)

The sole matter for examination in this case was whether Cardinal Pell committed ... crimes. People have seen in this case another emblematic story of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest. And it has brought a deeper weariness of soul to people of faith.

I have lost count of the conversations I have had with our people, who continue ... in the way of Jesus Christ, yet whose anguish and anger towards the institutions of the Church and her leaders is visceral. ... You tell me of your outrage that this has been allowed to happen. Yours is a righteous anger and I share it with you.

The Cross points us to ... restoration and Christ's promised hope. Healing the damage done to those who have suffered Church-related sexual abuse is the task I lead.

(Please) join me in walking with our brothers and sisters who have experienced abuse ... This means active support for rigorous

safeguarding policies and practices, respectful listening to survivors of abuse, and our own conversion.

Let us pray for 'J' and his family; pray for Cardinal Pell and his family; pray and work for survivors of abuse; and build a Church that is centred on God's love for each person.