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National Deacons Conference to focus on “Word, Worship, Service”

“Word, Worship, Service” will be the focus when more than 50 deacons and their wives gather at Pennant Hills, in the Diocese of Broken Bay, next month for a National Deacons’ Conference.

Deacon Peter Olsen, the Chairman of the National Committee of Deacons, said those deacons attending the conference from August 6 to 9, will represent most states of Australia, as well as New Zealand.

“The theme really encapsulates the vocation of the permanent deacon and will serve as a great focal point for our distinguished speakers and for our working sessions,” Deacon Olsen said.

Bishop David Walker will open the conference and give a presentation on the Word. Bishop Anthony Fisher will speak on “Service Ministry of a Deacon” and Bishop Michael Malone will give his views on “The Diaconate in Australia – Past, Present and Future”.

The Hon. Tony Abbott will deliver an address on “The Church in Australia”, while other speakers include Fr Frank Devoy, the Director of the Office of Clergy Life and Ministry; Fr Gerard Kelly; and Deacon Jim Curtain from Melbourne.

Deacon Paul Simmons, Coordinator of the Permanent Diaconate in Australia, Deacon Tony Aspinall, Member of the Australian Council for Clergy Life and Ministry, and Deacon Anthony Gooley, the Editor of ‘AusDeacon News’ will also give reports.

Deacon Olsen said delegates would take time out on Saturday August 8 to commemorate the 100 years anniversary of the death of Blessed Mary Mackillop. Sr Kristen Johnston rsj will share some thoughts on Mary Mackillop before the celebration of the Eucharist.

Fr Frank Brennan SJ will be the guest speaker at the conference dinner.

Deacon Olsen said the ministry of the permanent deacon was going from strength to strength in Australia, with about 100 deacons currently serving across most dioceses.

“The ministry of the deacon goes back to the earliest Church communities and we read in the Acts of the Apostles how the Apostles chose seven men as deacons to help them in their ministry of service,” he said. “The need arose because a certain group of people in the community were being neglected. Today, deacons are called to continue these ministries of service, to meet people where they are, and especially on the margins.”

The role of the permanent deacon was revitalised at the Second Vatican Council and has begun to grow more strongly in recent decades.

“This conference will be a wonderful opportunity for permanent deacons and their wives across Australia to gather together and really tap into the spirituality, theology and practical issues that underpin their vocation, so they can return to their diocese with fresh inspiration and vigour.”

The conference is being supported by the Manly Union, The Australian Catholic University, Catholic Church Insurances and The Broken Bay Diocese.

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