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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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Declaration of the “ad interim” Director of the Holy See Press Office, Alessandro Gisotti

The Holy See agrees with the statement issued by the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference regarding the sentence of guilt in the first instance concerning Cardinal George Pell.

This is painful news that, as we are well aware, has shocked many people, not only in Australia. As already expressed on other occasions, we have the utmost respect for the Australian judicial authorities.

Out of this respect, we await the outcome of the appeals process, recalling that Cardinal Pell maintains his innocence and has the right to defend himself until the last stage of appeal.

While awaiting the definitive judgement, we unite ourselves with the Australian bishops in praying for all victims of abuse, and reaffirm our commitment to do everything possible so that the Church might be a safe home for all, especially for children and the most vulnerable.

In order to ensure the course of justice, the Holy Father has confirmed the precautionary measures which had been imposed by the local Ordinary on Cardinal George Pell when he returned to Australia. That is, while awaiting the definitive assessment of the facts, as is the norm, Cardinal George Pell is prohibited from exercising public ministry and from having any voluntary contact whatsoever with minors.