

## Press communiqué

The Holy See has learned with regret the news of charges filed in Australia against Card. George Pell for decades-old actions that have been attributed to him.

Having become aware of the charges, Card. Pell, acting in full respect for civil laws, has decided to return to his country to face the charges against him, recognizing the importance of his participation to ensure that the process is carried out fairly, and to foster the search for truth.

The Holy Father, having been informed by Card. Pell, has granted the Cardinal a leave of absence so he can defend himself.

During the Prefect's absence, the Secretariat for the Economy will continue to carry out its institutional tasks. The Secretaries will remain at their posts to carry forward the ordinary affairs of the dicastery, *donec aliter provideatur*.

The Holy Father, who has appreciated Cardinal Pell's honesty during his three years of work in the Roman Curia, is grateful for his collaboration, and in particular, for his energetic dedication to the reforms in the economic and administrative sector, as well as his active participation in the Council of Cardinals (C9).

The Holy See expresses its respect for the Australian justice system that will have to decide the merits of the questions raised. At the same time, it is important to recall that Card. Pell has openly and repeatedly condemned as immoral and intolerable the acts of abuse committed against minors; has cooperated in the past with Australian authorities (for example, in his depositions before the Royal Commission); has supported the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors; and finally, as a diocesan bishop in Australia, has introduced systems and procedures both for the protection of minors and to provide assistance to victims of abuse.