

Following the fifth and final day of their 2007 Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of Canada are returning today to their respective dioceses.

During the week, special focus was given to the new evangelization. In this light, the Bishops also reviewed the structures of their Conference. Restructuring must respond to the realities of today's Church, noted Archbishop André Gaumond, outgoing President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).

The Bishops of Canada had previously identified various ecclesial issues they wished to consider. These became topics for workshops on questions such as evangelization and faith education; the Church's public presence in society; Aboriginal Peoples in the North and in urban areas; and new realities facing Catholics because of immigration.

The results of the workshop discussions will be a basis for future work by the Episcopal Commissions and committees over the coming years.

Amnesty International

Over the past year, Amnesty International adopted a policy on access to abortion, a position being criticized by Catholics around the world. This is a movement that was founded to defend the rights of the oppressed as well as freedom of conscience and expression, noted CCCB President Archbishop Gaumond. "What a paradox that the smallest of human beings - unborn children - are now being put at risk by those who should be their defenders," he said. In a letter already published in July 2006, the CCCB had clearly expressed its disappointment with the Amnesty International decision, pointing out that "As clearly and consistently affirmed in the teachings of the Catholic Church, the purposeful destruction of the human embryo is immoral ."

The Bishops noted that in spite of CCCB efforts with Canadian representatives of Amnesty International, its position has remained unchanged to date. Taking into consideration that many Catholics until now have supported Amnesty International, the Bishops asked the CCCB Permanent Council to decide how the Conference should deal with this question.