

On June 1, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI received Australia's Governor-General Quentin Bryce at the Vatican during her visit to Rome for the 150th anniversary of Italy's republic. She's the first woman to hold this prominent title. As Governor General she holds the executive office for the Commonwealth and also represents the Queen of England in Australia. Wearing a short veil, Ms Bryce and the Holy Father spoke of the recent disasters which affected many people in Japan and New Zealand as well as the floods in Queensland and Victoria. They also discussed the contribution of the Catholic Church to Australian society, the treatment of refugees as well as environmental issues.

Following the meeting the Governor-General presented the Pope with an Indigenous painting and document box from Bungendore, on the ACT border. The Holy Father gave Ms Bryce a gold medallion bearing his image.

Also at the meeting was Australia's Ambassador to the Holy See, Tim Fischer AC and along with Ms Bryce's husband and staff. Ms Bryce also attended a military parade for the 150th anniversary celebrations. However at the start of the day the Governor-General visited Domus Australia where she was welcomed by Cardinal George Pell. Cardinal Pell showed Ms Bryce over the pilgrim house, which is nearing completion after two years of restoration and renovation. Ms Bryce was extremely impressed with the modern and comfortable facilities as well as the beautifully restored art work in the chapel and the Roman ruins which were uncovered during the building work. These include a section of wall and pathway which date back to 100BC.

(The report was précised from *Catholic Communications, Sydney Archdiocese*, 2 Jun 2011)