



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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4 May 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Over the weekend of the 27th & 28th April, I visited the Parish of Blackall / Tambo and also met with parishioners of the communities of Barcaldine, Aramac, Longreach and Alpha. I listened to the challenges of the Central West and how they keep their faith alive through gathering for Mass on Sunday and their apostolic activity and outreach to the people of the Central West. At these meetings, the parishioners expressed how grateful they were for the ministry of their priests and the many priests and religious who have supported them in their faith.

With the resignation of the Parish Priest from the Parishes of Longreach and Barcaldine, it leaves a gap in the sacramental and pastoral care of the Parishes of the Central West. The priest assigned to these areas drives long distances to ensure that our communities receive Mass. I have visited the far-reaching mass centres; there are parishioners who have also driven for an hour or two to join with the community for Mass.

I have tried to distribute our priests evenly across the regions of our Diocese, taking into account the size of the parish, the Catholic population, the number of schools within the Parish, the socio-economic profile and the distances between Mass centres.

I am indeed grateful to the priests of our Diocese and the overseas priests, many of whom occupy leadership positions alongside our Diocesan priests.

We all share in being responsible for our church and ensuring our people have access to priestly ministry and regular Mass; this includes the Central West.

In the short term, from next weekend, through their amazing generosity, a retired Priest and senior Parish Priests are offering their priestly services to the Central West. This will place an obvious strain on our parishes, and I trust you will offer your support and prayers.

Initially, Father Terry Stallard will spend two months in the Central West. This will be followed by our Senior Parish Priests, Fathers Stephen Hanly, Don White, Matthew Moloney, Peter Tonti and Bryan Hanifin, who will each reside in the Central West for a month to provide a priestly presence and offer some ministry formation for lay leadership in the Central West.

Bishop Michael McCarthy

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Through their amazing generosity and through your support, they are reaching out to those who also need access to regular Sunday Mass. Please keep your priests in your prayers.

May God's blessings come upon the Diocese as we reach out to one another.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton