



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Prot: 21021:MMsp_02

8 January 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

As we begin a new year, I wish you all of God's blessings. The year of 2020 will certainly go down as a challenging year as we have negotiated around COVID 19. With a New Year, we hope that the pandemic may be tamed. In recent weeks, we have been witnessing just how quickly the virus can be transmitted, resulting in shutdowns and isolation. Hygiene directives have become our new norm and at all times ensuring our health.

This time last year I made many priestly appointments, and just as the priests took up their appointments and without connecting with the parishioners, our churches were closed. Disappointingly, many of our priests were unable to celebrate Mass with our parishioners and were restricted in their pastoral ministry. With the restricted opening of our churches and watching closely the directives of Queensland Health, fortunately pastoral ministry has resumed, and our churches are able to accommodate parishioners within the two square metre rule.

This year, we have a few changes to the priests available for parish work. Father Bryan Hanifin retires from full time ministry after nearly fifty years of generous priestly service. Father Bryan has been the Administrator of the Cathedral and I am appreciative of his marvellous five and a half years of loyal and dedicated service. Father Bryan will reside in Rockhampton after retiring as Administrator of the Cathedral.

Father Thadayoose Lazar, after ten years of service as a Heralds of Good News priest working in our Diocese, will transfer to America at the end of January. We wish him all of God's blessings and best wishes for his new appointment and I thank him for his years of service to the people of this Diocese.

Over these past few years, our diocesan priests have begun to engage in post graduate studies. Father Andrew Chase has completed a Doctorate in Theology. Father Andrew Hogan has completed two and half years of a Licentiate in Canon Law (Catholic University of Leuven - Belgium) and Father Don White is over halfway towards a Licentiate in Moral Theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum, Rome). When COVID 19 caused the world to shut down, Fathers Andrew and Don were in Belgium and Italy and both returned to Australia hastily. They have continued their studies online, attending lectures through the night via the e-platform and providing pastoral and sacramental care to the parishioners of the Diocese during the day. I am hopeful that they might be able to complete these courses later this year at their respective universities if the pandemic abates.

In a few weeks' time, Father Stephen Hanly will begin a twelve-month course on Spirituality at the Heart of Life – Centre for Spiritual and Pastoral Formation in Melbourne. Heart of Life provides formation for leaders within the Australian Church.

Bishop Michael McCarthy

170 William Street, PO Box 611, Rockhampton Qld 4700, Australia
Phone: +61 7 4887 3070 | Email: bishop@rok.catholic.net.au
Web: www.rok.catholic.net.au

As your Bishop, I am committed to our priests continuing their studies and formation. Already, I have been privileged to experience the wisdom of their fields of studies. With their further education, each of these priests provide a valuable contribution for our Diocese and our Province.

Considering all of these changes and to minimise disruption throughout the Diocese during this time of pandemic; I outline the priestly pastoral and sacramental ministry for our parishes throughout our Diocese by region.

Central West Region:

Fathers Raj and Shaiju will continue to work *in solidum* across the parishes of the Central West with the assistance of the Pastoral Co-ordinator, Loretta McKeering. A new roster will come into effect on 1 February 2021 which will ensure that the two priests will be moving around the major centres of the region regularly and ensuring coverage of all of the towns and their peoples. In December, Sister Mary was farewelled and has now moved back to Sydney. We are appreciative of Sister Mary and Sister Cath who have ministered to the people of the Central West for fifteen years.

Central Highlands Region:

Fathers Truc, Yon and Jomon, along with Deacon Ashwin, Sisters Cecilia, Carmel and Colleen continue to minister through the parishes of the Central Highlands.

Northern Region:

Father Stephen begins a program of study with the Heart of Life Centre, Melbourne in late January. Father James has been appointed as Administrator of the Parishes of St Joseph's and St Brigid's and will be assisted by Father Sijo while Father Stephen is away on study leave.

Fathers Don and Jayanthi will minister to the parishes of the Southern Mackay Cluster.

Father Alex has been appointed as the Parish Priest of St John's, Walkerston and Administrator of the Parishes of Holy Rosary Marian and St Francis de Sales, Finch Hatton.

Southern Region:

With the departure of Father Thadayoose, Father Simeon has been appointed as the Administrator of the Valleys Region Parish. As Father Simeon is also the Associate Pastor to the Gladstone Parish, he will divide his time equally between the Gladstone and Valleys Region parishes. Due to Father Simeon being committed to the weekend mass schedule of the Gladstone Parish, two weekends of Masses in the Valleys Region Parish will be from priests based in Rockhampton, with Father Simeon looking after the other two weekends.

Fathers Peter and Gasper in Bundaberg and Father Andrew in Gladstone will continue to minister to their communities.

Central Region:

As Father Bryan is retiring as Administrator of the Cathedral and Parish Priest of the Cathedral Parish of St Joseph, Father Matthias and I will be directing and undertaking the sacramental and pastoral care of the Cathedral Parish. It is not usual for the Bishop to take on this role, but to minimise disruption within the Diocese by moving more priests around, I have decided for a

few months to step in to assist. Father Andrew Hogan, who is presently a full-time student for this year will continue to assist with weekend Masses and some pastoral work within the parishes of the Central Region.

Fathers Matthew, Marcel and Bill will continue to minister to their respective communities.

During these next few months, I will be working with the various regions of the Diocese to undertake a review of the number of priests that can be allocated to each region and for regions to undertake strategic planning for the future.

I am looking forward to Deacon Ashwin's Priestly Ordination during 2021.

At present in the seminary, the Diocese has Peter Doherty who has completed two years. Peter is a local fellow from Bundaberg. Recently, I accepted Grant Sutherland to begin seminary formation at Holy Spirit Seminary for this Diocese, beginning in late January 2021. Michael Otto, our Executive Officer – Vocations, Youth & Family Life, has been working with Grant over these past few years. It is important that we continue to support our young people and encourage their vocations.

I am grateful to our overseas born priests for their willingness to come to Australia and assist us here with the mission, but we do need to assist by providing our own vocations for the future of this Diocese. We cannot just rely on priests from outside our Diocese.

Wishing all of God's blessings on our Diocese and for vocations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton