



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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03 July 2020

Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart Sandringham,

My prayerful greetings to you all during these challenging times.

I know that many of you over recent months have been looking to the future directions of your Parishes. I write to you today to share some exciting news that I hope will bring direction to your thoughts and discussions.

Your Parishes, and other parishes that surround you, have been well served over many decades by good pastors and lay leaders who have faithfully ministered in your communities.

As you may be aware, a number of parishes in the Bayside area of the Archdiocese are currently being managed by priests who are on a temporary placement, or who have already reached the retiring age for clergy of seventy-five years.

In looking to how we address this reality, rather than seeing it as something problematic, we are presented with an excellent opportunity to imagine new ways to reinvigorate the mission of the Gospel into the region.

Consideration and planning must be towards building vibrant parishes, that are well-equipped for the ongoing pastoral outreach and spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of your neighbourhoods. This is a future that is filled with hope and vitality, and one that I know we all wish to share in.

In looking at the overall needs of the Archdiocese in its local faith communities, there is clearly a need for extensive planning, consultation and reform. We are currently working to establish processes to achieve this across the Archdiocese over the next few years. Nonetheless, some

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decisions need to be made now to ensure that the ongoing spiritual and pastoral needs of Catholics are being met in areas such as yours.

One of the challenges that we face as an Archdiocese is that we have a limited number of priests available to allocate across our two hundred and ten parishes. Many of the parishes in the inner parts of Melbourne are very small, which is a reflection of past historical priorities, while others in the growing part of the city are quite extensive. For example, according to the latest Australian census there were 2,591 Catholics living in the parish of Sandringham, while the parish of Craigieburn, an outer Northern suburb, had 24,000 Catholics.

These numbers in no way diminish the living value and legacy of each individual community, but call for a particular and localised way to meet the needs of each community. The Parish of Sacred Heart now needs the stability of a Parish Priest and leadership team in the longer term to enable it to continue to provide effective evangelising, pastoral planning and care. Parishes also need to be resourced to ensure effective administration, especially with employment, safeguarding and financial compliance obligations. The neighbouring parishes of Gardenvale and Brighton, Hampton, and Ricketts Point are all in a similar situation.

With a view to meeting the needs of Catholics across the broader region I have asked Fr David Cartwright, currently Parish Priest of Moreland and Fr Dean Mathieson, currently Administrator of Dandenong North, to work together as Priests *in solidum* across the Parishes of St Joan of Arc, St James, St Mary's Hampton, Sacred Heart Sandringham and Nazareth Parish Ricketts Point. Fr Vittorio Ricciardi, Parish Priest of Immaculate Heart of Mary Hampton East, and Fr Ian Ranson, Parish Priest of St Finbar's Brighton East, will remain in their particular appointments, but have also expressed their willingness to work with this collaborative mission-focused endeavour.

Under the *in solidum* model, the pastoral care of a parish, or several parishes, is entrusted to several priests. The priests each enjoy the stability of Office of a Parish Priest and have the duties and functions of a Parish Priest. One of them is designated Moderator of the pastoral action of the parish. The Moderator is the juridical representative of the parish and is answerable to the diocesan bishop.

I am very grateful that Fr David Cartwright has accepted the role of Moderator.

What is being put in place is a new way of expressing the mission of the Church in these parishes of the Archdiocese. It is a new way of collaboration between faith communities and clergy working together to meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of the Catholics of the area. Fr David and Fr Dean are aware that each of the Parishes has its own identity and history and they intend to work with them to form ongoing vibrant and viable faith communities that will build on those individual stories.

I am sure you would want to join me in thanking Fr O'Loughlin for his generous, wise and inspiring leadership over the past twenty-four years at Sacred Heart. The new arrangements will take effect from Wednesday 5 August but Fr O'Loughlin has agreed to stay on for a few weeks to ensure an orderly transition.

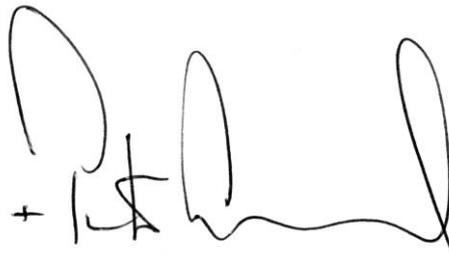
Fr David and Fr Dean will be working with each of the communities over the first 3 months in order to establish a plan for the close collaboration of all involved.

I encourage you as parishioners and leaders of Sacred Heart Parish to work with Fr David and Fr Dean and the leadership of the other parishes that will form part of this endeavour, to ensure that the stories of each of the communities stays alive and thrives into the future.

I wish all the parishes involved in this bold new venture every blessing of the Lord, as you come together to walk this journey of faith. May our Blessed Mother accompany you on the journey.

With every grace and blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A Comensoli', with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

