



June 2018 – June 2023



Over the past several months our Diocesan Pastoral Council in close liaison with parish leaders in each of our six Deaneries has worked towards the renewal of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. I am grateful to all who shared their insights so that we can be good stewards of the resources of time, talent, and treasure in the mission Jesus has entrusted to us.

This is in keeping with the mandate: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Today we live in a society, when perhaps more than ever before, the emphasis is on an individualistic approach to life. In such circumstances all depends solely on the autonomous person who becomes the yardstick whereby everything is evaluated.

Even though we are subject to the temptations of the culture in which we live, our vision as Catholics is meant to be very different from the prevailing cultural vision. In many ways we are challenged to be like early missionaries, awakening the prevalent culture and its people to the healing light of the risen Jesus. The mandate of Jesus to "Go, make disciples" may not take us to foreign lands but today challenges us to offer our time, talent, and resources for the transformation of the very culture in which we live.

A pastoral plan is necessary to help us be active and joyful bearers of the Gospel, so that the "good news" of God's inclusive love may reach every person from the 'range to the borders'.

I invite you to reflect on our Pastoral Plan and its priorities in your parishes, your communities, your families, your circles of friends, and wherever you find yourselves, so that, like those first missionaries, we can give faithful witness to Jesus as we live out the mission entrusted to each of us.

Most Reverend Robert McGuckin

Bishop of Toowoomba

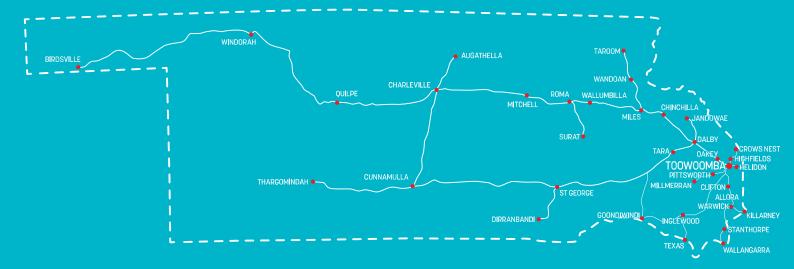
Easter 2018



# DIOCESAN STATEMENT

The Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba:

Nurturing welcoming communities from the Range to the Borders where God's mercy, love and the joy of the Gospel are experienced, celebrated and shared.



# KEY PASTORAL DIRECTIONS

The Pastoral Plan of the Diocese outlines six strategic priority areas synthesised from consultation. All are interwoven with the vital threads of Stewardship, Evangelisation and Social Ministry to help deepen our faith and to send us forth as joyful missionaries equipped to witness to Jesus by living and sharing our faith with all. Our pastoral priorities are:

- 1. Family Engagement
- 2. Spiritual Development
- 3. Parish Leadership
- 4. Liturgy
- 5. Creating a Safe and Welcoming Church
- 6. Social Justice

We seek to achieve "A Pastoral Ministry with holiness at its core, and parishes that live out of a 'spirituality of communion' and can provide for their people 'training in holiness' and education in prayer'." (Novo Millennio Ineunte, Pope John Paul II, 2000)

# **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

The Second Vatican Council described the family as the 'domestic Church' because it is in the home that we ordinarily first receive the faith. Family life plays a key role in our growth to wholeness (holiness) because it is the primary place where both children and adults learn to intimately love other persons and encounter the forgiving healing power of Christ. The experience of human love enables us to experience God's love and to awaken to the movement of the Spirit received at baptism which sends us out as missionary disciples. Recognising our families as the cornerstone of Church and society, we will support and strengthen them in building loving relationships and helping them to live the Gospel. **We will:** 

- Cultivate a welcoming and supportive parish community
- Develop faith opportunities for families and other groups
- · Resource and encourage families to celebrate the sacred in their daily life experiences
- · Work collaboratively with schools to embrace diversity and offer pastoral care and support
- Offer opportunities for families to participate in service and liturgical ministries.

Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and brothers. Whoever does the will of the Father is my mother and sister and brothers." (Mt 12:49-50)

### SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Spiritual development is a life-long process of transformation, opening us through prayer and all of life's experiences to encounter the God in "whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). As we are awakened to the indwelling presence of Christ, we discover the inner freedom to live as joyful witnesses of God's love and mercy, so inviting others into an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Committing to the spiritual journey deepens the quality of our personal lives but also empowers us to act together for the transformation of our culture and society, according to the vision of Christ. **We will:** 

- . Establish a Spirituality Centre appropriately resourced to assist parishes and individuals to
  - o Integrate faith and life experience
  - Nurture a contemplative stance to life
  - Establish spiritual companionship.

May he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, ... you are filled with the utter fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

# PARISH LEADERSHIP

God bestows special gifts of leadership on certain members of our community, and we commit ourselves to the discernment and development of these leadership gifts so that the work of being stewards of the Gospel can continue for generations to come. We are called to work collaboratively in a spirit of communion. Empowered by God's Spirit, we commit as the body of Christ to promote God's mission in the reality of our context. **We will:** 

- Promote the formation of current and future parish leaders
- Ensure proper agreements and remuneration for recognised leadership positions
- Develop governance strategies to assist parishes into the future
- Provide support to small rural parishes as they deal with possible structural changes.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden...Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father. (Mt 5:14-16)

# **LITURGY**

The Church teaches that liturgy is an "action" of the whole Christ and it is the whole community, the body of Christ united with its Head that celebrates. Therefore the liturgical setting must be designed in such a way as to facilitate this action, this celebration. We are committed to exploring ways to enhance the quality of worship and prayer so that it is vibrant, meaningful and inclusive into the future. **We will:** 

- · Train parish liturgy teams to ensure life-giving liturgies
- Train and authorise lay people to lead reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals outside of Mass according to Diocesan guidelines
- · Provide strategies for lay people to complement the homily by sharing their faith experience
- Educate parishioners in the role of lay-led liturgies in parish life.

Let us greet him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. Enter, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the Lord who made us. For this is our God, whose people we are, God's well -tended flock. (Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7)

# CREATING A SAFE AND WELCOMING CHURCH

We embrace the mission of Jesus to create an inclusive society, one in which everyone is welcomed, respected and able to experience a sense of belonging. In this way we will all be able to "experience, celebrate and share God's mercy, love and the joy of the Gospel". We commit to honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability in all our interactions with parishioners, workers (paid and volunteer) and the wider community so as to establish trust and create a safe and welcoming Church. **We will:** 

- Build relationships through improved communication and collaboration within and amongst parishes,
  deaneries and all diocesan agencies
- Develop a culture of listening and 'seeing' people where they are
- Listen to all with respect, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised
- Affirm the dignity and ensure the safety of all, mindful of the recommendations of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd (CPSL) and other official bodies.

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

# **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

A commitment to social justice and social welfare is characteristic of communities that: celebrate; support and harmonise the diverse groups within their midst; respond to their spiritual and social needs; extend welcome and hospitality to all. We embrace inclusion and endeavour to serve people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, genders, ages, socioeconomics, physical challenges, sexual orientations, backgrounds or life experiences. We invite all who identify with our mission and values to join us in working toward our vision. We interact with humility, in a spirit of community-building, to understand and learn together. **Through the Diocesan Social Justice Commission, we will:** 

- Establish social justice groups at the parish level to provide education and develop response to local and global issues
- · Recognise the vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised and the excluded in our midst
- Involve youth in parishes and schools in social justice outreach
- Investigate support relationships between eastern and western parishes.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.(John 13:35)"



God of all peoples,

you inspire us by the courage of our pioneers and enrich us by the ancient wisdom of the indigenous people who first inhabited this land.

Through the intercession of Mary of the Southern Cross may the people of this diocese and all who live within our shores be gathered together to form one people.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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