

With joy-filled anticipation, I gladly call us to a Diocesan Synod in 2026 and entrust this work into the hands of the Holy Spirit.

In the year 2029 we will celebrate the 100 years since our Diocese was founded. We have already begun to look towards this milestone in our history. Part of this will be to restore and renew our Cathedral church. An appeal has been launched to this end, and all will have the opportunity to assist in this important initiative. Our Cathedral is so much more than a large church. It represents the focal point of our unity with me as shepherd gathering the faithful in faith and love. Everyone should feel that the Cathedral belongs to them as we identify as priests and people of God in our Diocese.

This special day of celebrating the Jubilee year coincides with the celebration for our Diocesan patron, Mary of the Southern Cross which we celebrate each year on the first of September. Mary remains the preeminent example of faithfulness to the ways of Christ. Her "yes" to God inspires us and encourages us to allow Christ to be at the very centre of all our activities and to make a daily "yes" to him. May her life of simplicity and faithful hope in God's ways, spur us on to live in fidelity to the Gospel.

Beloved in Christ, my prayers are with you. Please continue to pray for me that I may be a faithful shepherd amongst you. Mary of the Southern Cross, pray for us.



Bishop of Toowoomba



Pastoral Letter to the People of God in the Diocese of Toowoomba

Jubilee Year of Hope – 31 August 2025



A message from Bishop Ken Howell, Bishop of Toowoomba

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In the two years that I have been your Bishop; this is the first time I have written a pastoral letter. This Jubilee Year of Hope affords me a great opportunity to share some hope-filled words to accompany an important moment in the life of our Church. Let me firstly thank each of you for your kind welcome to the Diocese. My time with you thus far has enabled me to appreciate something of your life and faith, which is shaped by your experiences in the city or our rural communities.

A Table for All: Compassion in Action

Jesus insists in today's Gospel that everyone should have a seat at our table. Go out, he says, and invite those you would never consider inviting. It's his way of saying that every person has something to offer, and our charity and compassion can never be limited to those we know. God's table is for every person, and this is how it will be in eternity, where there will be no distinction between people's status or rank.

In our broad diocese, we have people who work the land and others who work in an office. There are the young and our much-respected seniors. There are those who are suffering through physical or mental illness and those who care for them. Sadly, there are people without a bed or table to call their own.

Recently, I attended one of our parish churches providing shelter, a bed and a meal for homeless people on a cold winter's evening. I was deeply impressed by what I experienced and so thankful that our parishioners were caring for the homeless in this way.

Today is also Social Justice Sunday, where we bishops have issued our annual statement. This year, we focus on homelessness, which is a growing scourge in our country. I hope you might read our reflections and our call to action. We are asked to invite those experiencing homelessness to a place at our table through offering whatever we can to ensure that no one can be without the safety of being at home.

The Jubilee of Hope proclaims an essential element of believing and belonging. Through the eyes of faith, we see hope as so much more than having an optimistic outlook. It is something born within belief. Our relationship with Christ gives perspective to every aspect of life and enables us to see possibilities far beyond the issues surrounding us. Hope dares to believe that with God, there are always possibilities for every situation. As hope-filled pilgrims, we continue to walk by faith, eagerly believing that the ways of Christ have changed our world and continue to bring people to the hope we have been blessed to experience in life.

Calling a Diocesan Synod

As a Diocesan family, I believe the time is right for us to hold a Synod. Synods are to be a regular feature of our Diocesan story. This will be a moment in our history where we grow in our appreciation of who we are, and how we can move forward to plan and live into the future. Soon, there will be preparation sessions where all will be invited to participate. Here, we can share our common hopes for our local Church. In doing this, we will reflect on the decrees of our recent Australian Plenary Council and other aspects that have come to us from last year's Synod in Rome. These guideposts can help us plan a future that both respects our rich diocesan heritage and helps us face a confident future for this local Church family across our very large Diocese.