Faith in our Future
Pastoral Plan for the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta
2014-2018
Pope Francis made headlines when he kissed and blessed a man in St Peter’s Square who suffered with boil-like tumours appearing over his head and body. Like Jesus responding to cries for help from the sick, our Holy Father courageously and lovingly embraced him. At the dawn of the third millennium, his predecessor and soon-to-be-saint John Paul II invited the Church to “put out into the deep” (Lk 5:4) and take up anew the great mission of evangelisation (Novo Millennio Ineunte 1-2). He reminded us that holiness is the foundation and touchstone of all pastoral planning (31).

At this time, I am excited to be launching Faith in Our Future, our Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Parramatta. Like Pope Francis, like John Paul the Great, like Jesus Christ Himself, it calls us to be fearless in our proclamation of the Gospel, in word and deed. We want to be, as Pope Francis exhorts, “bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation” (Evangelii Gaudium 33).

The launch of our Pastoral Plan is the culmination of two years of conversation and discernment about the future of the Diocese. Thousands of people from Rydalmere to Blackheath, from Windsor to Granville, contributed their ideas in public consultations or online. Last year, we also consulted our agencies and clergy, religious institutes and migrant chaplains. All contributors have raised fresh ideas and directions for our families, parishes, schools, chaplaincies and diocesan ministries to better respond to our needs and to support our Catholic community’s growth in faith.

The Vision

Faith in Our Future has two basic goals for us in the next five years: to grow in faith and to share our faith.

When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment of all, the big reason for existing, He replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind . . . and your neighbour as yourself” (Mkt 22:37-9).

To grow in our faith is to grow in love of God. To share our faith is to love our neighbour and invite him or her into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Lord of the Universe.

Catholic disciples of Parramatta should know and love their Catholic faith, encounter Christ in His Word and Sacraments – that is, in the Bible, Confession and the Eucharist – and go into the world proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel, unashamedly sharing their faith with family, friends, work colleagues and others. They must be disciples who reach out to others, evangelise by witnessing to Christ in all facets of their lives and invite others to know Christ and His Bride, the Church. In short, we must invite others to ‘come and see’ Jesus and ‘go and tell’ His story.

The Pastoral Plan

To grow and to share our faith we will focus on five areas of greatest need and potential:

- Supporting our families
- Connecting better with the young
- Building upon our ethnic diversity
- Supporting our vocations (lay and clerical)
- New evangelisation

Each of these areas offers opportunities to foster new and mature disciples for our 21st Century mission. Inside the complete version of Faith in Our Future (see www.fai thinourfuture.org.au), you will find a number of resources and fresh directions that your community of faith, parish, ministry group or family can take up and use to build a stronger future of faith in each area of pastoral concern. Parishes will find almost one hundred suggestions for renewal. Actions that will inspire parish pastoral councils, ministry groups, sacramental teams and welcomers are included. Our parishes are also invited to collaborate more often, and share their wisdom and expertise. By working more closely, we can live our mission in a united way, minimise duplication and make the most of the resources we have.

Included are a number of new initiatives for our diocesan agencies including CatholicCare, our Catholic education system, the Institute for Mission, our Youth Office, our ethnic chaplaincies and many more. These will better support all our people in their discipleship, relationships, formation and mission in the wider community.

You will also find an implementation guide for the variety of people and groups that make up our Diocese. No matter what your gifts and the role you play in the Church or wider community, there is a place for you to join us in this great mission of building the Kingdom of God in Western Sydney.

Our pastoral planning website offers additional resources for renewal (www.faithinourfuture.org.au) and a new Pastoral Planning Office has been established to support you and your community in making the most of this opportunity to grow and share our faith as disciples, called and sent, by Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Faith in Our Future is much more than a document. Its success depends on more than good intentions. It is an opportunity to live the Gospel in the Diocese of Parramatta in fresh, creative and faith-filled ways. But it needs your support, prayers, gifts and time in order to succeed. Let us confidently call on the Lord as we move forward with love, with hope, with faith in our future.
Parish Actions

Inside *Faith in Our Future* you will find a wealth of ideas for parish renewal. These suggested actions represent the wisdom of our communities gathered through consultation, and that of our pastors, as well as research into the best practice of parishes both here in Australia and abroad.

Every member of our parishes and migrant communities can contribute to the mission of our Church by reading through these ideas and suggestions, discussing them and planning for action with their priests and leaders, parish pastoral councils, ministry groups and fellow parishioners.

A sample of the ideas available to your community is provided below:

• Appoint a parish welcome coordinator (volunteer) and ensure trained welcomers for each Mass, with a presence at church entrances and exits to:
  - greet all parishioners on arrival
  - provide material related to the liturgy
  - offer information on parish life and events
  - gather details of identifiable newcomers

• Assemble and periodically update parish ‘welcome packs’ or kits providing:
  - information related to the parish and parish staff
  - details of Mass times, Confession and regular devotions

• Ensure the parish community offers (or collaborates with another to provide) a parish ‘parent and toddler’ or early years group specifically for parishioners with children under school age, facilitating the mutual support of new parents and strengthening a sense of Church belonging and support

• Parish prayer cards and other Catholic prayers
• Ministry group and pastoral care contact numbers
• Parish registration cards to encourage belonging
• Communication cards to call forth expressions of interest in ministry or parish groups

• Each parish, with their family group coordinator, to develop a ministry team for specific outreach to families within associated school communities, to invite participation in parish-based family groups as well as deliver faith and life resources provided by the new Family and Life Office to these families (collaboration to be sought with school RECs in this effort)

• Each parish to host social events, in collaboration with local Catholic schools, to bring families together in the context of faith (e.g. Mothers’ and Fathers’ Day breakfasts and momentos, Shrove Tuesday pancake mornings, Easter egg painting events, parish Christmas carols and the like). Catholic families that have children in State schools to be included

• Ensure the parish community offers (or collaborates with another to provide) a grief or bereavement group for all those who have experienced loss, regardless of age (including widows and those who have suffered miscarriage or neo-natal loss). Seek experienced parishioners to volunteer as leaders with the support of CatholicCare Social Services

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28

Visit [www.faithinourfuture.org.au](http://www.faithinourfuture.org.au) to view the complete list of almost 100 ideas for parish renewal.
Agency Actions

The Diocese of Parramatta includes a number of agencies which assist the Bishop in the pastoral care of the entire community. These agencies support the life and mission of our parish communities, parish ministry groups and the wider community in a number of ways, by providing educational, pastoral and financial services, offering relationship support, and opportunities for engaging with those within and beyond the Catholic community in activities of social justice, welfare, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. By focusing their work on the five pastoral priorities of our Diocese, each of our agencies seeks to support and promote the growth and sharing of faith in the years to come.

A sample of actions to be implemented by our agencies over the term of the Pastoral Plan (2014-2018) is provided below:

- Establish a Family and Life Office in the Diocese
- Enhance Catholic pre-marriage and marriage education (CatholicCare, clergy)
- Review and enhance formation in the vocation of teaching (CEO)
- Provide faith resources for young parents following the baptism of their children (Office for Worship, IFM)
- Undertake the ‘We Have a Story’ Project to further engage people with a disability and their families in parish life (CatholicCare, Social Justice Office)
- Review and renew resources available to parish youth teams and leaders (Catholic Youth Parramatta)
- Target areas of school life in which staff and students may grow in holiness and in their sense of mission e.g. Scripture or prayer (CEO)
- Increase participation of State school students in parish, diocesan and national youth activities, including World Youth Days (CCD, Catholic Youth Parramatta)
- Creation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Policy for the Diocese to ensure pastoral, social service, education and other needs and gifts are met with respect to cultural sensitivities (CatholicCare)
- Increase recruitment and retention of volunteers for the All Saints of Africa Centre at Blacktown (Social Justice Office, CatholicCare, parishes)
- Research and consult regarding appropriate elements of a broad Diocesan Formation Plan (Institute for Mission, Pastoral Planning Office)
- Investigate and promote ways to assist parishes in raising funds for parish-specific projects and initiatives (Catholic Fundraising)
- Increase the number of new SRE teachers (catechists) for ministry in State secondary schools (CCD)
- Grow support for Catholic projects, pastoral infrastructure and diocesan income (DDF)
- Strengthening of theological education and pastoral formation of seminarians, permanent deacons and priests within the Diocese in areas including, but not limited to, the discernment of gifts among the laity, Scripture and homiletics, marriage preparation and enrichment, social media, collaborative ministry with fellow clergy and neighbouring parishes

Visit www.faithinourfuture.org.au to view the complete list of agency actions.
Other Diocesan Initiatives

In addition to the renewal of our parishes and agencies, there are a number of other initiatives that the Diocese of Parramatta will seek to bring to life over the next five years. These include initiatives within the Chancery, in our deaneries, as well as plans for collaboration with other organisations that can assist our people grow and share their faith.

A sample of initiatives to be implemented by our Diocese in the coming years is provided below:

- A comprehensive review and restructuring of the Chancery to achieve a renewed focus on ‘service delivery’ to stakeholders and best practice in administration and communications
- Establishment of a Pastoral Planning Office to support the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and provide resources, workshops and advice to foster a culture of planning
- A commitment to best practice in the area of the management of professional standards, including the creation of a new Office for Safeguarding and Professional Standards
- An audit of all parish and agencies websites and social media, with the establishment or renewal of these sites and media across the Diocese
- Establish adoration chapels within each deanery of the Diocese for prayer and reflection
- Enhance the awareness and availability of sacramental Confession throughout the Diocese
- Expand university chaplaincy by establishing a multicampus ministry, consisting of teams of clergy, religious and laity providing for pastoral care and sacramental support of students, staff and alumni

Visit www.faithinourfuture.org.au to view the complete list of other diocesan initiatives.
Parish Collaborations

The Diocese invites adjoining parish communities to explore the possibilities of working together more closely, sharing gifts and resources in their pastoral care and outreach in the wider community. Collaboration allows parishes to realise goals and opportunities they could not achieve on their own, minimises duplication in pastoral life and activity, and provides compelling witness to our Church as a communion.

Parish priests, parish pastoral councils and ministry groups are encouraged to explore the opportunities of working together, across parishes, in areas including:

- the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in which there are often smaller numbers of candidates and catechumens that could be enriched by one another's faith and life experience;
- youth events and activities that bring together young people in a local area or deanery;
- social justice initiatives as a form of common witness to faith in the wider community;
- combined welcome and outreach campaigns, particularly at Easter and Christmas;
- shared faith formation events and social gatherings between parishes, minimising duplication;
- sacramental preparation and resource sharing where practical;
- other areas of pastoral life where working together can enable good outcomes.

Parishes that could work together:

- St Patrick’s Parish, Blacktown, St Michael’s Parish, Blacktown South, St Bernadette’s Parish, Lalor Park, and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills
- St John Vianney Parish, Doonside, and St Andrew the Apostle Parish, Marayong
- St Aidan’s Parish, Rooty Hill, and Good Shepherd Parish, Plumpton
- St Finbar’s Parish, Glenbrook, and Our Lady of the Way Parish, Emu Plains
- Our Lady of the Nativity Parish, Lawson, and St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Springwood
- Sacred Heart Parish, Blackheath, and St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Parish, Upper Blue Mountains
- Blessed John XXIII Parish, Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens, Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Rouse Hill, and Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kellyville
- Mary Immaculate Parish, Quakers Hill-Schofields, and St John the Evangelist Parish, Riverstone
- The Parish of Richmond, Richmond, and St Matthew’s Parish, Windsor
- St Michael’s Parish, Baulkham Hills, St Bernadette’s Parish, Castle Hill, and St Madeleine Sophie Barat Parish, Kenthurst
- Our Lady of Mt Carmel Parish, Wentworthville, and Sacred Heart Parish, Westmead
- St Anthony of Padua Parish, Toongabbie, and St Paul the Apostle Parish, Winston Hills
- Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, Greystanes, St Patrick’s Parish, Guildford, and St Margaret Mary’s Parish, Merrylands
- Holy Spirit Parish, St Clair, and Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, St Marys
- Holy Family Parish, Mt Druitt, and Sacred Heart Parish, Mt Druitt South
- St Nicholas of Myra Parish, Penrith, Corpus Christi Parish, Cranebrook, and St Joseph’s Parish, Kingswood
- Padre Pio Parish, Glenmore Park, and Sacred Heart Parish, Luddenham-Warragamba
- St Patrick’s Cathedral Parish, Parramatta, St Monica’s Parish, Parramatta North, St Oliver Plunkett’s Parish, Harris Park, and Christ the King Parish, North Rocks
- Holy Trinity Parish, Granville, and Holy Family Parish, Granville East
- Holy Name of Mary Parish, Rydalmere, and St Bernadette’s Parish, Dundas Valley
New Structures for Mission

Our parish communities are central to the growth and sharing of faith throughout our Diocese and beyond. Many of our parish boundaries and buildings, however, go back fifty or a hundred years or more. It is important that our parishes are best positioned to respond to population growth, demographic change and emerging needs, both now and into the future. The goal is to ensure that all parishioners continue to have access to Mass, other sacraments of the Church and the best pastoral support possible to live their baptismal mission, that our priests are able to serve in areas of greatest need, and that our parishes are viable into the future.

By reviewing our parishes, resources and commitments from time to time we act as good stewards of the gifts that God has given, ensuring the vitality of our diocesan community as a whole. The following actions are recommended within the Diocese to strengthen our common mission:

- The Holy Spirit Seminary to be expanded and relocated to the Kenilworth site at Harris Park (2013-2015), including contemporary accommodation and facilities for the formation of priests and potentially for the formation of permanent deacons as well;

- The parishes of St Patrick’s Parish, Blacktown, and St Michael’s Parish, Blacktown South, to be twinned and ultimately amalgamated to form the ‘Parish of Blacktown’. In due course, the church of St Patrick might be replaced with a church of sufficient size for parish and diocesan celebrations, on the same or a new site;

- The parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Baulkham Hills South, to be divided into the parishes of St Michael’s Parish, Baulkham Hills, St Monica’s Parish, Parramatta North, and St Paul the Apostle Parish, Winston Hills;

- A new parish to be planned for Box Hill;

- Marsden Park to be considered a site of land purchase for a future church and school development by the Diocese;

- A Mass Centre to be located at Chisholm Catholic Primary School, Bligh Park, for the foreseeable future;

- A Mass Centre, in conjunction with a Catholic bookshop, to be established within the Parramatta CBD in the light of rapid development, pedestrian traffic and population growth (2013);

- The potential for other Mass Centres and bookshops to be explored in shopping areas with high populations (e.g. Rouse Hill, Castle Hill, Blacktown, Penrith);

- The Diocese to continue to monitor any potential areas of growing pastoral need (e.g. in the North West and South West Growth Areas, in Parramatta CBD);

- Migrant chaplaincies to consider sharing existing facilities with other chaplaincies and rationalisation where appropriate;

- Parish boundaries across the Diocese to be reviewed over the next five years, taking into account demographic change, developments in transport infrastructure (e.g. roads, railway stations), land releases, institutions demanding pastoral care (e.g. schools, nursing homes, hospitals) as well as any natural or topographic features that are relevant to the boundaries and pastoral activities of parish communities.

“Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities”

– Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 3
Putting our Pastoral Plan into Action

Implementation Guides for Faith in Our Future

There are many ways to put Faith in Our Future into action. How each one of us makes the most of the Pastoral Plan depends largely on who we are, our different gifts, and the role we play in our communities. The important thing is to get involved, visit our website (www.faithinourfuture.org.au), and discuss our Diocesan Pastoral Plan with your community, family and friends.

At www.faithinourfuture.org.au you will find a number of implementation guides for the variety of people and groups that shape our communities of faith. There are purpose-written guides for parish pastoral councils, parish ministry groups, migrant communities, families and individual members of our Diocese. Faith in Our Future is an adaptable resource that enables you to build upon the good things already taking place in your community as well as offering suggestions for renewal and fresh directions to foster discipleship and outreach in the future.

You can also contact our Pastoral Planning Office for advice and support to make the most of the Pastoral Plan in your community or ministry group (02 9831 4911).

Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan matters because wanting to grow and share our faith is not enough; we need to be reflective, organised and united to achieve these goals. Every person can make an enormous difference in building up the Church and the Kingdom of God which it serves.

Looking for more support or information?

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Prayer for Faith in our Future

Gracious God, source of all life, you call us together in faith and love as the Diocese of Parramatta.

As one body in Christ, may we respond to your Word, attend to the signs of the times, and live as your disciples in word and deed.

Renew our hearts in your Holy Spirit to grow and share our faith with the world; give us courage and grace to live faith in our future.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Acknowledgements

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