



03 December 2016

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you on this Second Sunday in Advent the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and pray that this Season continues to awaken in us a spirit of hope and longing as we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation at Christmas.

I am filled with gratitude for the support and care that you have shown to me during this short time that I have been blessed to serve as your Archbishop, especially in my recent illness and my recovery.

Vision for the Archdiocese

When I was installed as Archbishop on 12 November 2014, I had the opportunity to share with you my hope for our Church in Sydney. My hope for a Church in which the Gospel is preached with joy, the wisdom of our tradition mined with fidelity, the sacraments celebrated with dignity and welcome, and the seminaries, convents and youth groups teeming with new life; a Church in which our parishes, chaplaincies and educational institutions are true centres of the new evangelisation, our laity theologically literate and spiritually well-formed, our outreach to the needy effective and growing, and God glorified above all.

Growing vital and sustainable Christian Communities – ‘Parish 2020’

I am committed to ensuring that the whole of our Archdiocese continues to grow in the great commission Christ gave his disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19).

By God's grace our parishes have nurtured the faith of hundreds of thousands of people across the years, and as we give thanks for the past, we must plan for the future. I want to ensure that people of Sydney continue to encounter Christ and grow in their faith and I am convinced that the Christian communities found in our parishes remain our most vital asset to facilitate this.

I have commenced a new pastoral project called ‘Parish 2020’ with the goal of reinvigorating our mission in support of new approaches to Evangelisation and more effective pastoral care. ‘Parish 2020’ aims to renew and strengthen parishes for our future Catholic communities committed to both an inward focus on a deepening relationship with Christ, and an outward orientation toward proclaiming the Gospel and reaching those who do not form an active part of our parishes.

Goals for ‘Parish 2020’

I have established a working group for the Archdiocese which will be focused on the task of helping to support the growth of more vibrant parishes in the Archdiocese. ‘Parish 2020’ will be entrusted with the tasks of hearing our priests, lay leaders and people with a view to:

- renewing the pastoral plan;
- bringing the best demographic and planning expertise to bear upon the distribution of our deaneries, parishes, schools and agencies;
- reducing silos and promoting greater collaboration between parishes, schools, agencies and chancery;
- ensuring our parishes are sustainable

New Deaneries

In March this year, following extensive research by the working group, I announced a new structure for the Archdiocese, with newly configured deaneries, and appointed deans with clearly defined responsibilities. With the appointment of our new Auxiliary Bishops, Bishop Randazzo and Bishop Umbers, together with Bishop Brady, a Bishop in each of our three regions, along with the Deans, will assist me in the pastoral care of the Archdiocese. Over time, the new Deaneries will look at ways in which greater collaboration can be fostered to enhance our ministry. You can view the Archdiocesan Map, including new Deaneries <http://www.sydneycatholic.org/parishes/>

Parish Collaborations and new structures for Mission

I have asked the working group to help me identify parishes that would be strengthened through relationship with other parishes, possible collaborations and new structures for mission between 2017-2020, and they will be guided in this work through consultation with clergy and the lay faithful of the Archdiocese.

Over the next 12 months, the working group will be reviewing Parishes with the aim of providing proposals on any changes that may be required in the coming years to best fulfill our mission. I will consider these proposals and then engage in a period of consultation and feedback from you to seek your wisdom in making good decisions that take into account the circumstances of each parish.

Your involvement is vital

I have already begun consultation with Clergy who have been involved in discussion and prayerful discernment since March this year, and now I want to hear from you.

I have asked Parish Priests to consult with either their Pastoral Council, or a specially appointed Parish leadership team whose role would involve considering the most suitable method for consultation for your Parish, and generally oversee and support this pastoral initiative at a local level.

Between January to March 2017 I am asking for you to provide me with your comments and opinions regarding mission priorities and ways of strengthening Parishes for our Archdiocese. This initial feedback will be followed by a further phase of consultation between April – June 2017 involving Deanery based focus groups, all of which is essential to inform focus, and assist me with decisions about directions for our Archdiocese in the coming years.

Decisions on parish reconfigurations and ways of strengthening our ministry are not decisions to be taken lightly and need time, consultation, prayer, and careful discernment. I enclose with this letter a prayer for the work of 'Parish 2020' and as we prepare to move forward together in this next exciting chapter in our history, I ask that you pray for the fruitfulness of this most important endeavour.

With this letter I have included both a CD presentation which I ask be shown at Masses on the 'Parish 2020' launch weekend, the 2nd Sunday of Advent, Sunday 4th December, and a further resource to be made available to Parishioners to collect. This resource provides more information about 'Parish 2020' and answers a few common questions.

As I pray daily for each one of you, I thank you for everything that you do for me, for the Archdiocese of Sydney, and for your parish family.

Yours in Christ



Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY