



Liturgical Launch of Parish Renewal

SPEECH

**By The Most Rev Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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Jesus IS among us.

In the Goldfields, the Wheatbelt, throughout our country parishes.

Jesus is among us in the city, from Clarkson and Yanchep to Baldivis and Port Kennedy.

Jesus is among us here tonight.

“The Good shepherd walks with us and we together walk in his footsteps.”

As Archbishop Costelloe has reminded us, these words not only introduce us to the Archdiocesan Plan they in fact sum up all that we aspire to be and to do. We have an innovative initiative for parish renewal that gives us direction, that is flexible and that works.

The direction it gives us is a vision of collaboration as an Archdiocese that promises options in parish ministry that we have not seen before.

It is flexible in that, yes, we all are moving towards being a fully collaborative diocese. However individual parishes and agencies rightly demand that the principal of subsidiarity be respected.

It is an initiative that works. We have two groups or hubs of parishes, one south of the river and one hub north, both for some time now have been seeing for themselves the benefits of collaboration.

But above all it is an initiative, as Archbishop Costelloe has emphasised, that is centred in prayer, centred in the person of Jesus, under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

It takes seriously our Archbishop's call to “Return the Church to Christ and return Christ to the Church.” In other words, Christ is to be at the heart of everything we say, everything we do and everything we are.

We come together as an Archdiocese first and foremost to discover what is it that God wants us to do. We collaborate firstly to discern.

In saying this, I am very mindful that there has been and continues to be various other initiatives to revitalise and strengthen parish life. I am also very conscious of the enormous work of our Religious Brothers and Sisters, of various organisations and of wonderful individual lay persons.



It is so true that we often reap the hard work of others.

This evening however, as our Archbishop has announced, the Constitution that we are launching and the supporting resources are part of a new Archdiocesan initiative. It has a vision for parish renewal that sees the parish in the context of the whole Archdiocese. An Archdiocese that is collaborative.

As you will read in the preamble of the new Constitution for Parish Pastoral Councils, each parish is a legal entity, in Canon Law it is a juridical person, it has a certain independence. At the same time however it is part of a diocese.

It is like a branch of the one vine and it is important to remember that each parish has a neighbouring parish. We are called to be true neighbours to each other, helpful and supportive neighbours.

This new initiative takes seriously that in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, we indeed do walk together as an Archdiocese. Parishes and agencies working together.

This initiative recognises that the archdiocese is a territory made up of parishes and the Archdiocesan agencies a visible sign of the heartfelt pastoral care of our Archbishop. As Archbishop Costelloe said, they are one of the key and crucial ways that he reaches out to parishes as our Chief Pastor.

This new initiative calls us to come together as an Archdiocese and to work out what is it that God wants us to do. What specific ways is God asking us to participate in and continue the life and ministry of Jesus, who walks amongst us.

I mentioned earlier that two groups or hubs of parishes are already putting this initiative into practice and it is bearing wonderful fruit.

The parishes of Highgate, Joondanna and Mt Lawley form one hub and the clergy with some of their key laity meet regularly.

One of their Faith Formation initiatives close to Advent, is a series of nine sessions on the Eucharist. They have put together a sub-committee that will work on behalf of all three parishes and which will include the participation of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross.

We also have another hub, the parishes of Baldivis, Kwinana, Port Kennedy and Rockingham. They too have been putting this initiative of collaboration into practice. They are now going to share with us one of their new initiatives with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. It is a wonderful story of collaboration between the four parishes together with two Archdiocesan agencies and the local catholic secondary school.



Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

This is our new vision for parish renewal in action. Working in collaboration with one another and calling on the Holy Spirit to guide us to discern God's plans for our Archdiocese. This mindset/perspective is a first for our Archdiocese.

As I mentioned earlier we do recognise all the work that is already being in the Archdiocese. This vision of collaboration is a call to work differently rather than simply working more. However, we are mindful that we do need to encourage more parishioners to engage in the life of their parish. To this end my Parish Renewal Implementation Group has other initiatives in mind that take up the challenge of Pope Francis, namely that every person, to their own capacity, is called to be a missionary disciple.

One of the main support resources to the new Constitution is an extensive handbook that will be located on a dedicated website for parish renewal. In a moment, Carmel Suart, a member of my Parish that Renewal Implementation Group and the writer of this e-handbook will explore with us some of its features.

In conclusion, we know the harvest is indeed rich so let us now pray to the Lord of the Harvest. For we need to be thoroughly conscious that if we are to do what God wants us to be doing, we need to truly contemplate His face. We need have the mind and heart of Christ, in order to be his hands.