

## **Warmest greetings to my brothers and sisters of the Adelaide Cathedral Parish.**

As I reflect on the recent feasts of Pentecost and the Holy Trinity, I thank God for your own faithful witness to the love of Jesus Christ and of the Church.

In this letter, I want to share with you my Vision for the Adelaide Cathedral parish for the next 10 years.

*My vision is that in the Adelaide Cathedral parish, will lead the way for the rest of the Archdiocese, forming a single parish from the smaller communities that make it up. We will be recognised as a parish where families will be supported, strengthened and called into mission to other families, especially those who are struggling or disadvantaged in any way.*

I want this parish to be a blue print for the rest of the diocese illustrating how many small communities can become a single large community and live even more vibrantly as Church proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to all who encounter us.

This is a big vision and one which requires us to change the way we go about everything.

What will this mean?

- The Adelaide Cathedral parish will be experienced as a loving welcoming community, interested in those who come and extending a hand of friendship and support for those in need.
- We will have organised ourselves into a single parish and made this vision the focus of our planning.
- We will establish ways to connect with families around and after the baptism of their children
- We will show an understanding of the joys and challenges facing families and will provide support networks for family life
- Schools will be strong partners in supporting young people and family-centred Church
- Liturgical celebrations will include families and many will be child and family focused.

### ***The central place of families***

Pope John Paul II in his beautiful encyclical on family life reminds us that:

*"The future of humanity passes by way of the family"*

*It is therefore, indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor to save and foster the values and requirements of the family." John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio*

Families will be the central focus of how we plan, organise and celebrate our life as Church.

Our parish will be a signpost for others as a community embracing family life in all its forms, those recently married, or those celebrating many years of marriage, those who are single, divorced, in blended families and families that have been separated by force of circumstance such as migrant or refugee families.

Children will have a very special place in our community and we will find ways to work with parents, care-givers, teachers and others to nourish the spirit of our children and create welcoming spaces for them to express their faith in creative and appropriate ways.

## *What is the context for my vision?*

As a Church we are experiencing a profound shift. The world to which we are called to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ is not the same as the world in which many of us grew up. It is in a changing context that we are charged with spreading this Good News of love, compassion, forgiveness for sins, justice for the poor, care for those in need and hospitality to the stranger.

We may feel that the biggest challenge facing the Church is a shortage of priests. The pressure on our priests and the challenge of there being fewer priests, creates the immediate necessity to bring parishes together into larger pastoral units. This is a huge change for all of us.

However, while the impact of the declining number of priests available for ministry is created difficulties, at the same time, another significant change is having an impact on the Church. Our great challenge is to engage with all our families and young people so that they experience a Church personally connected to them, welcoming them and seeking their contribution to the way we will be Church for the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Without this vision, we will continue to face not only a shortage of priests, but also a shortage of people.

In order to achieve this vision, we must start with two key areas:

1. An understanding of family life today.
2. Appropriate structures so we can become a single parish

### *1. Family life today*

Families have undergone a profound change and many of them are under a great deal of pressure. In my pastoral letter *Cherishing Famil Life* I spoke about some of these challenges. I also named our relationships as being constitutive of our own well-being. We need each other to be fully alive as Church. Families need support and nourishment to assist them to meet the joys and challenges with hope and resilience. Indeed more than this, families have a vocation to one another. Pope John Paul II also wrote:

*We believe that the family teaches the meaning of love,  
which is self-giving.  
That love will spiral out,  
first, to other members of one's own family,  
then to other families,  
then to society at large.  
Familiaris Consortio*

Families are the single most significant place where children learn first learn love, forgiveness, compassion, justice and care for those in need. Children's spirits grow and their innate knowledge of God is deepened by their experience of family life. My hope is that all parents will feel comfortable and supported to nourish their children's God-given spirit as it grows.

In order to do this, many families can benefit from a fresh encounter with the story of Jesus. Since Easter we have been hearing how in the very early Church, the numbers of disciples grew as Jesus story was told. We have also heard of the challenges the early Church faced and the difficult decisions the apostles had to let go of some traditions in order to spread the Good News to the ends of the earth.

For families to hear this message of Good News, strengthening families and providing opportunities for the story of Jesus to be told anew, is key to their capacity to live out their vocation to the world and to our renewed life as Church.

### *Schools are key partners*

Schools are vital to my vision of family centred Church. Teachers are already ahead of us in understanding young people and their families. They encounter every day the extraordinary goodness of our youth, their vibrancy and desire to respond to injustice and care for the poor and for God's Creation. Schools also know the challenges of engaging young people and their parents in the Tradition of the Church, especially participation in Sunday Mass. And yet schools know that people's hearts are yearning for spiritual nourishment. Schools are finding ways to respond to this yearning and we need to work with them to ensure that together we can provide the richest opportunities for families and young people.

### *The Adelaide Cathedral Parish*

We have, in our large parish, the great gift of families who are migrants or refugees. Their joy and faithfulness in celebrating the Sacraments is wonderful for all of us to experience. As many of you know from your own lives, newly-arrived migrant families are hungry for welcome and hospitality as they learn to live in a new country. Refugee families often come with nothing except their children and the scars of many years of struggle and fear. These families need our special care and welcome as well as very practical assistance as they become part of a new culture vastly different from their own. Many families are also affected by health issues, mental illness, housing or financial problems.

My vision is that we will reflect together as companions on the journey of life, nourished by Eucharist to be food for others. Our mission is to provide support for children and families that will nourish and strengthen them to be families for one another. There are many resources available and partnerships we can develop, however the most important resource is ourselves. Our preparedness to reach out to one another in love will enable us to welcome families, welcome their children and prepare our liturgies with them in mind. We will be more able to respond to each others challenges, celebrate with each other the joys of our lives.

## *2. Structures*

### *Diversity in the parish*

Within the parish there are many important communities. We are graced with the Aboriginal Catholic Community, a sizeable Italian community, the Latin Mass community, the African Community, the Croatian and Indonesian communities, and many people from India celebrate in the Cathedral among many other cultures. We also have three large schools, a major hospital, many nursing homes and the Adelaide Remand Centre. Each of these is a place for the Gospel to be proclaimed as Good News for all.

In order for us to continue to move forward in hope, it is essential that we are a single parish and not a federation of former parishes or separate groupings. Each community has a proud inheritance to bring to the unified parish to which it now belongs. I want us to create a community life that will be a witness of faith and hope to the wider society.

## *Organisation*

The parish has already embarked upon significant reform of structures that will help us to achieve this vision. These structures include:

- One parish leadership team
- One Parish Pastoral Council
- One Finance Council
- Sharing priests and pastoral workers who work as part of a team across the whole parish
- Strengthening our partnerships with schools as a vital platform of our pastoral planning.
- Building personal connections in neighbourhoods

## *Celebration of the Sacraments*

As we explore and develop such initiatives, we will be strengthened by our celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments that are the heart of our Christian life. These call us into unity with one another and nourish us for the work of renewal. I am very grateful, for the generosity of the team of priests working in the Cathedral parish. They faithfully serve the people of this newly-combined community. I ask you all to continue to pray for our priests and to also pray the prayer for vocations as a daily practice. Strong and capable lay leaders and deacons are now working alongside the priests of the parish in a spirit of mutual partnership. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

## *Prayer*

The prayer of Lectio-Divina is a powerful and yet gentle way to begin or deepen a personal encounter with the story of Jesus.

My hope is that through this change process, we will have prayer groups in across the parish, praying this simple method to bring the yearning of our hearts to Jesus Word in the Gospels. I encourage the meetings of the parish to use this form of prayer, so that we will become a parish more and more deeply founded in the Word of God.

In Matthew's Gospel we hear that Jesus measures our following him by the times we welcomed the stranger, visited those in prison, fed the hungry, satisfied someone's thirst. If we live by this practical application of our faith, we will be experienced as a community that is truly a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit gave courage to the disciples, lighting in their hearts a fire that could not be contained, to carry forth our Lord's message of salvation, love, forgiveness and merciful compassion. I pray that we will be led by the Spirit with the same passion and guidance to make this vision a reality together.

Archbishop Philip Wilson