

# **A Letter to Parishioners on the Future direction of Parishes in the Melbourne Archdiocese**

Dear Parishioners;

Following on from the archbishop's letter at Pentecost and the recent gatherings arranged by the Archdiocese in informing us on the sense of direction for the future of the church in Melbourne.

The purpose of the archdiocese's gathering is to re-Image our local church as mission communities.

The history of our makeup from our first Archbishop James Gould was to establish mission communities in various localities with organic growth of faith then forming Parishes as we now see.

The Council of Bishops have identified that the current structure of parishes is unsustainable and with a sense of urgency are bringing forth the need for change. Understanding that these missions need to be resourced to fulfil the pastoral needs and to be financially viable.

## **What is Mission**

- A distinctive faith locality that lends itself to being lived out in family-like arrangements
- A local area, with communalities in history, demographics, geography.
- A collaborative focus on evangelisation, worship, formation and outreach.
- A family of communities, working together for visibility and vitality.
- Canonical Guidance: Congregation of Clergy, Instruction on the pastoral conversion of Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church (2020 forms of canonical arrangements)

The reframing of the needs of the archdiocese is not to focus on the amalgamation of parishes, but the coming together of communities as a family of parishes. The size, location and culture of groups organically coming together at different rates.

Journeying forward from here is understanding the direction that the archdiocese is heading, which is based on data already compiled and considered as a guide, from 209 Parishes to 62 Missions. Here in our region (Southern) going from 52 Parishes to perhaps 15 Missions. The vision remains Decrement and organic gathering of communities that have commonality of purpose.

Each family of parishes shall be tasked with developing strategies for greater cooperation with the aim of establishing more viable, vibrant and sustainable entities that are better equipped to provide quality sacramental and liturgical life and promote mission and outreach of our faith.

We've been informed that the first phase of the process started late last year with the archdiocese undertaking research in understanding the characteristics of successful parishes including;

- What are the key drivers of success for parishes?
- Where are the high pockets of Catholics with the Archdiocese?
- Where are the parishes compared to parishioners and the benchmark of population to support a parish?
- Where is the increased demand for parish services?

Utilising the services of "Location IQ" to obtain demographic and economic analysis. They also acknowledged that the largest grouping of parishes is within 15 kilometres of the CBD.

The mission is to realign our valuable resources acknowledging the shortage of priests and the overall decline in numbers to maintain sustainable entities "Fit for Mission" and acknowledging that there is no excuse for inaction.

The progress this year includes Regional Gatherings with Decrement of Missions for each region Next year, Further Discernment of Further Missions and the Establishment of some "Missions" From 2023 onwards, Reviewing the first 12 Months of "Missions" and then continue with the establishment of further "Missions"

Stewardship Team