



THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF BUNDABERG

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Dear Parishioners,

Please find information regarding the Parish Plan that the Parish Planning Group has been engaged in over a number of months. We are trusting you will assist by participating in the process. Please be aware of your role through parish notices, parish bulletin, parish website and Facebook. The Church Chat with Joe McCorley is an excellent means of understanding the basis of the plan. The Church Chat can be seen by visiting the Parish website <https://www.bundabergcatholic.net.au> or YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/thecatholicparishofbundaberg>

A COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF BUNDABERG.

GOAL: To raise awareness, and the engagement of all Parishioners in a project to develop “A VISION AND REVITALISATION PLAN” for the Future of the Bundaberg Parish.

1. WHY IS SUCH A PLAN NECESSARY?

There are significant trends and challenges facing Christian Churches generally, and Catholic Churches particularly, in Australia today. Some research results:

- Regular Mass attendance in Australia in 1960, was 1.3 million out of 2.75 million Catholics (46%);
- In 2001, attendance was 750,000 out of 5 million Catholics, (15%)
- In 2016, attendance was 60,000 out of 5.2 million Catholics, (11.8%)
- Between 1991 and 2001, 60,000 Australian Catholics aged 25-34 years, stopped identifying as Catholics.
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2. In late 2016, in our Parish of Bundaberg, a National Church Life Survey was undertaken by Parishioners who attended Mass. Approximately 600 parishioners completed the survey. An analysis of the survey by the NCLS Team recorded some very positive results:

- 84% had a very strong sense of belonging to the parish;
- 80% said “God is most important to me than anything else.”
- 57% spent time in prayer, bible reading and meditation each day or most days;
- 44% agreed that their gifts, skills and talents were being used well in the parish;
- 40% said they had experienced much growth in their faith over the past 12 months
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However, some real challenges emerged for the future of the parish, which should not be ignored:

- Only 20% of Mass attendees were under 50 years of age;
- While 80% of Mass attendees were over 50 years of age, (with 70+being 47%).
- Recent Census figures show that Church marriages had decreased from 45 in the year 2000, to 2 in the year 2019.
- Church Funerals had also decreased from 47 to 35 in the same period.

Some findings for the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference in 2006, conducted by their Pastoral Projects Office:

- Irrelevance of the Church to Life today;
- Misuse of Power and Authority in the Church;
- Lack of Intellectual stimulation in today's Church;
- A sense of exclusion because of Church rules;
- Family or Household issues prevented Church attendance;
- A crisis of Faith existed.

3. To address these issues our Parish Priest, Fr Peter Tonti invited a number of Parishioners to form a Parish Planning Committee to develop a Strategic Plan for the Future of the Parish. At the first meeting of the Parish Planning Group, following prayer, the group was asked to reflect on a) WHAT WAS WORKING WELL IN THE PARISH; and b) WHAT WERE CONCERNS FOR THE FUTURE.

Their thoughts, (APPENDIX A) reflected much of the NCLS survey results.

4. After a few meetings of the Parish Planning Group, Fr Peter and the planning executive, decided that the Group needed the assistance of an experienced Facilitator in the area of Church planning and development to assist the group.
Craig Farmer was recommended as a skilled facilitator, trainer and coach who had worked successfully with Church and Non- Profit organisations for over 20 years.
5. The Parish Planning Group met with Craig Farmer, via Zoom, and presented him with the history of our Parish and the process we were undertaking to revitalise our Parish. Craig was impressed with the number of active Catholics we have at present and shared our concerns about the challenges for the future. He observed many Churches were struggling but doing nothing about it. Within a few days, Craig came back to us with a "Consultation Overview" for our discussion. A decision was made to engage Craig Farmer to assist us in the achievement of our goals.
6. At the following meeting, The Parish Planning Group approved the Project Plan presented by Craig: "Catholic Parish of Bundaberg – Vision and Revitalisation Project Plan".
The first step in the initiation of this plan was to ensure that all members of the Parish Community were aware of the revitalisation plan.
7. A number of stages are involved in the "Communication and Engagement Plan" Appendix B
You will note the plan will involve a number of consultations and workshops of different groups in the Parish/Faith community, as well as groups not engaged in the parish.
8. It is the decision of the Parish Planning Group to engage a wide spread of parish representatives in all of the different stages of the planning process. The process of communication at this time of the Corona Virus has been difficult.
It is a time that we really need the support, and especially the prayers of all parishioners to assist us in this project which, with the Holy Spirit, will guide our Church into the future.

Yours in Christ,
Peter Tonti PP