



# *Saint Catherine of Siena Catholic Parish*

**"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world ablaze!"**

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Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021

My dear people,

I pray that you are well during these unprecedented and challenging of times. The purpose of this letter is to share with you some exciting news for our parish community.

## **Proposed New Church and Facilities**

As you may have realised, our parish is growing rapidly in terms of new residential development in our area which in turn has led to many people moving into the parish. The current western boundary of the parish extends to Plumpton Road and you would have noticed how quickly new estates are coming up between the church and Plumpton Road.

At the start of this year, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) advised me that there will be two more primary catholic schools belonging to our parish by 2031. This is an exponential growth and many of these people will be Mass goers as indicated in data compiled by MACS. At this projected rate of growth, it would appear that our church will become too small to cater to the needs of the parishioners by that time. Indeed, if you cast your mind back to pre-COVID times, the worship space of the church had become too small for the 10:30am Mass congregation and we had to permanently set up the meeting rooms with chairs. Whilst the growth of the parish will be exciting, things will get more complicated as more people move into the area.

Furthermore, and as expected with the anticipated growth, we envisage the need for more space in order to be a vibrant and active parish. Facilities will be needed for all our church groups as well as the many additional activities that are currently being planned. Ideally, we should have our own parish centre where all people can be ministered to. Presently, the parish only owns the presbytery, the church and the land on which they are. Not even the carpark belongs to us! The relationship between the parish and CRC Caroline Springs (CS) is excellent but CRC CS is itself bound by the regulations of the state government and MACS. For instance, whenever we re-reopen after a lockdown, regulations prevent schools from having external groups on site. As such, parish groups are not able to meet at CRC CS. Also, when their facilities are required for extra-curricular activities, we need to make alternative arrangements and find somewhere else to meet.

The archdiocese and the parish have been in discussions and are looking into the exciting possibility of building a bigger Church together with an adjacent building for a parish centre. We are hoping that land would be bought alongside the next catholic primary school to open in the parish for us to build a new (bigger) church with a parish centre which would have a parish office, meeting rooms, multi-purpose gathering spaces and hopefully a parish hall.

**Today**, is the fourth anniversary of my appointment as your Parish Priest and my pastoral care of you involves planning for our future. Our current church building was completed in 2013 and consecrated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September that year. It is indeed a big shock to the system to already be considering moving somewhere else. The exponential growth of our parish was not envisaged at the time nor did the information then available indicate such growth.

Many will be sad and even upset with this announcement, which I totally acknowledge and completely understand. The words of Jesus in the Gospel according to John come to my mind at the moment: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat

falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (Jn 12:24) This passage speaks to me of what we, as the parish community, will have to go through.

Another way of looking at this is to remember that we outgrew the hall of Christ the Priest and needed a church that would be ours. Eight years later, now, we find ourselves in the situation again where a bigger church is needed for all the people who will be part of our community in the near future. All the effort, good work, hard work and sacrifices which went into the building of the current church will not be wasted. We also are in need of our own facilities to conduct all the parish activities and functions. These include offices for an Assistant Priest and the secretary. At the moment Robert and Mary share an office and Fr Simeon and Natasha share one too. As the parish continues to grow and along with it, the volume of work, the current situation will simply become increasingly difficult to manage.

As your Parish Priest, I wish to keep you informed of current discussions and future planning. Much more needs to be assessed and it is my duty to ensure our parish and our needs in the future are carefully thought through before any final decisions are made. It is my intention not only to keep you updated with any developments, but also to consult with you and I welcome feedback throughout the process. I had hoped to speak with you about all this in person. However, due to these COVID times, I am reaching out to you in this manner as I am committed to keeping you in the loop.

## **MISSION**

In his pastoral letter for Pentecost 2021, *Take The Way of the Gospel* [https://melbournecatholic.org/uploads/general/Take-the-Way-of-the-Gospel\\_print-friendly.pdf](https://melbournecatholic.org/uploads/general/Take-the-Way-of-the-Gospel_print-friendly.pdf), Archbishop Comensoli invites all of us to re-imagine our local church as mission communities. He envisaged that each mission would be “a family of local faith communities, gathered around a shared life, worship and

outreach.” The principal reason behind this way of thinking and this proposal is to pool the resources of different parishes together in order to be more efficient with the use of limited resources. For us, the proposed way of being a mission is to continue as we exist but with expanded boundaries. If this proposal goes ahead, then it further justifies our need for a bigger venue to gather and worship.

It is important to note that this simply is a proposal at this stage and we are now being invited to contemplate it. Once we have done this as a parish, we will need to be in conversations with the neighbouring parishes also before any decision can be made. In the interim, my fellow parishioners, should you hear comments or concerns, I encourage you to contact me as my pledge to you has always been of truth, care and transparency in the best interest of our parish.

## **DIVINE RENOVATION**

As I have mentioned a few times now, I embarked on a journey this year looking into running the parish in a different way so that the emphasis on evangelisation would be at the forefront of every decision we make. For that reason, Natasha was employed as our Evangelisation Coordinator whose primary role in the parish is to find ways to bring us together, get people back to worshipping as well as invite more people to come and be part of our parish family. I have also set up an Evangelisation Team (E-Team) and the role of this team at this moment is to come up with what can and must be done for evangelisation. They will also be responsible for the carrying out what is envisaged. The E-Team is a group of volunteers within our parish community who gather fortnightly to pray, reflect and think about how we can become a more mission-focused community. With a long term goal in mind that aligns with our parish vision, the E-Team will be strategising how we can bring new life into our community, lead more people to encountering Christ and setting up systems to support these adjustments. Alongside with these two new initiatives in the parish (Evangelisation Coordinator and the E-Team), I have been receiving

coaching from Mr Ron Huntley who is one of the people who started Divine Renovation. The first order of business was to form a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in the parish. I have invited Llewys Berchy, Natasha Berchy, Tony Caruana and Tina Matana to be part of the parish SLT and they have graciously accepted. We have had two meetings so far and the aim is that we will meet weekly. The SLT will be an advisory body to me and will be supporting me in the running of all parish activities.

### **Parish Pastoral Council**

These additional tasks that I have taken on have made me realise that I have too much on my plate. For that reason, I have decided to pause the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) for the time being. The current PPC's term of office finished in September this year which means that the PPC 2019-2021 has come to an end. Some current members have indicated that they are happy to continue while others decided to conclude their involvement with the PPC's end of term. Those who had decided to continue have accepted to be available to help with advice when needed and for that I am grateful. On your behalf, I would like to sincerely thank all of them for their work over the past two years.

### **Parish Town Hall**

I hereby invite you all to a Parish Town Hall meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> October at 7:30pm to further discuss all this information. On that date I will make available to you additional data given to me both by the archdiocese and MACS to illustrate the need for what has been outlined above. The map of the proposed Caroline Springs Mission will also be presented. It will also be an opportunity for me to introduce the members of the E-Team and of the SLT. I look forward to seeing many of you on that day. The current restrictions do not allow us to meet in person and this meeting will be held via ZOOM: <https://zoom.us/j/93544751009>.

From now until the Town Hall Meeting, I encourage you to send through any questions, feedback or queries about any of the above to our email address [carolinesprings@cam.org.au](mailto:carolinesprings@cam.org.au) or call the parish office. These will be addressed at the meeting. You are also most welcome to come to the meeting with questions, feedback, and comments on the night and I will try and answer as many of them as possible. Any questions not answered at the meeting will be addressed at a follow up meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> November at 7:30pm. The ZOOM link will be the same as above.

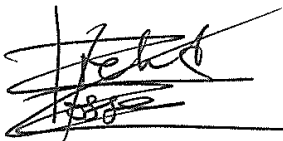
In the meantime, please pray for our community during this period so that all we do leads to the growing of the Kingdom of God here in Caroline Springs. One prayer initiative to which we are inviting you is “We walk by Faith” and the details will shortly be on our website and our Facebook page.

We ask the intercession of two great saints for the success of all our endeavours. Today is the Feast of St Francis of Assisi and we ask him to intercede for us. And, of course, we continue turning to our patron saint and we ask for her intercession.

St Francis of Assisi, Pray for us.

St Catherine of Siena, Pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Rosse', with a horizontal line underneath.

Fr Richard Rosse PP