



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

PARISH VISITATION REPORT

Parish of Caroline Springs

25 – 27 July 2025

Parish Priest: Fr. Richard Rosse

Parish Secretary: Ms. Maggie Mazzullo

**School Principals: Mrs. Adele Vesty (Christ the Priest Catholic Primary School)
Mr. Michael Ozbun (George Preca Primary School)**

Most Rev. Martin Ashe

Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne

386 Geelong Road, Kingsville VIC 3012 Australia
Phone: 03 9412 8404 Email: Western.AuxBp@cam.org.au

29 August 2025

Parish Community of St Catherine of Siena.

Dear Fr. Richard and Parishioners of St Catherine of Siena Parish,

Warm greetings to you all.

I was pleased to be able to visit your parish recently and spend some time with you and with your Parish Priest. Over those days, I was listening to many stories about life in the parish and how much you appreciate being part of the parish, some of you only for a short time and many more of you for quite a number of years. Many experiences were shared with me that spoke of your love and commitment to the parish. I am grateful to you for all that was shared with me and giving me a sense of what parish life is like for you at St Catherine of Siena Parish.

Having spoken about the time table of events that had been set in place for the next few days, Fr Richard and I went to the Church to celebrate the 9.30pm mass with fifty or so people attending. Following the Mass, I was able to briefly greet a number of the parishioners.

CHRIST THE PRIEST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL:

Fr Richard and I met with the Principal, Mrs Adele Vesty and spoke about the life of her school. Unfortunately, a number of the leadership team were unable to be present as it clashed with Sports Day event for schools in the area.

The name of the school focuses on the person of Christ and the centrality of his presence for the school. In order to deepen more the Catholic identity of the school, there are four cohorts of students, each with a patron saint, Catherine of Siena, Thomas Aquinas, Mary MacKillop and Therese of Lisieux. Each student will learn about their patron and the particular way they reveal the presence of Christ in their lives, and the communities they are part of. Each of the students will be part of a different cohort over their years in the school. Both the students and parents have a wonderful sense of belonging for their school. The school has a special Christ the Priest hymn emphasizing mercy, service and thanksgiving.

The Religious Education Coordinator is a very important leader in the school in nurturing its identity and the presence of Christ within the school. This is especially revealed in the various masses held throughout the year and the variety of prayer services. While the enrolment is predominantly Catholic, all the students are part of the faith life of the school. Fr Richard is very committed to the life of the school and visits the school regularly, spends a good deal of time in the school. This includes celebrating masses, the sacrament of reconciliation, visiting different classes over the year. He also celebrates the feast days of each of the cohort's saints. There is very good collaboration between the school and the parish and there are regular meetings of the Parish Priest, the Principal and the Religious Education Leader. Fr Richard is also an active member of the Combined School Advisory of Christ the Priest School and St George Preca School.

There are challenges for all those needing accreditation to teach RE and to ensure that the 10 hours are able to be completed within the same year. Having spent some time with the Principal and being taken around the school, we had morning tea with the staff

Commend:

There is a real desire to continue to grow the Catholic faith within the school community and this is being embraced by both the school leaders and the other members of staff.

ST GEORGE PRECA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL:

The parish's second school St George Preca Catholic School is about five minutes' drive from the Presbytery. We met with the Principal and the leadership team and were taken for a tour of the school itself. It is the only school in Australia having their patron as George Preca who founded the Society of Christian Doctrine. It is a large school with over seven hundred and thirty students with eighty-seven different nationalities.

The Principal takes pride in the school as having a spirit of Encounter permeating the school. There are a variety of sacred spaces, prayer spaces and icons around the school which speak of Christ's presence. As they do not have a church close to them, they nonetheless have a prayer service every Monday and have prayer times each day. Within each of the liturgical seasons the school has masses throughout the year. The school works closely with the parish in preparing the students for the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. The Principal and Fr Richard meet regularly and work closely together in both promoting and growing the Catholic identity of the school.

The Principal sees the combined School Advisory Board for both schools as a way of having a closer relationship between schools, and within the one parish.

While the overwhelming students in the school are Catholic there is a real commitment to integrating all the students into the overall educational and spiritual aims of the school. This is a challenge that all staff embrace as well. The Principal spoke of the faith of the Catholic school being especially revealed in recognizing the dignity of each child and ensuring the education and well-being needs of each child are being addressed. It is also to affirm the dignity of the staff.

The Teacher Accreditation Platform is a challenge for some of the staff but there appears to be real benefits resulting for the teachers involved in this program and for the school too.

The school has hopes to provide more library space including a space to gather as a community. Plans are in progress to build a Covered Outdoor Learning Area to address these needs.

Commend:

I commend the school for its commitment to growing the Catholic identity of the School and nurturing its relationship within the overall parish including advertising parish events.

MEETING WITH PARISH STAFF:

Following a light lunch at the presbytery, a meeting was held with members of the Parish staff. There are three parish offices within the presbytery.

The Parish Coordinator is full time and has been since the parish started in 2006. He assists in all matters in relation to the church building, all maintenance, all liturgical requirement and supports Fr Richard in overseeing the running of the parish and also advises on finances.

There are two Evangelization Coordinators. One is the overall coordinator of the leadership team and at the present time works eight hours a week. She oversees the evangelization initiatives in the parish especially the Alpha program. She is also responsible for the welcoming, hospitality events and fellowship gatherings. The second coordinator is also part time with 12 hours per week. His main area of responsibility is

the formation of young adults. He is also involved in discipleship formation for those who have been part of Alpha.

The Parish Secretary works three days per week. She looks after the phone and emails and manages the registers. One of her main tasks is being the Baptismal Coordinator and coordinates the volunteers in the Baptismal Ministry. She also manages Safeguarding requirements and training.

The Parish Registers are in good order.

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM:

A meeting with the Parish Leadership Team took place in the early evening. This team meets weekly to coordinate and oversee the evangelization initiatives in the parish. There are six members. They all have a sense of mission and have built up a great deal of respect and trust for each other. They also coordinate fellowship gatherings across the parish. Their overall purpose is to create a culture that is more outward looking with a focus on missionary renewal and not maintenance. With Fr Richard they have been coached through Ron Huntley and his team. They are trying to nurture new leaders in the parish.

Commend:

I commend the level of commitment of your Parish Leadership Team and their outward focus on being a missionary community

Recommend:

Your challenge in a growing Parish is to find ways to continually embed this orientation at all levels within your various groups and overall parish community itself. When you do this, the vibrancy of your community has a very outward focused dimension towards service in the world in the proclamation and living out of the Gospel.

THE PARISH FINANCE TEAM:

The Parish Finance Team meets every few months. It has six members and the PP and Parish Accountant are also present at these meetings.

One of the members is also on the Parish Staff.

The Archdiocesan Financial Office realizes that being in a growth corridor and making every effort to grow the parish, you have some moderate challenges financially mainly due to costs and salaries, and repairs and maintenance.

However, the Active Giving pledges have been very good over the last three years and has grown considerably since Covid. This has been the primary source of parish income. The parish also has cash and investment reserves. The parish is still paying off its loan to the CDF for the building of the church in 2013 and has been able to do this consistently over the last 10 years.

The Parish contributed a total of over \$6,000 to the Archbishop's campaign. Presently there is a plan in place to build a Hall in the near future which will provide more space for Parishioners to gather for its various community needs. There has been a Parish Fundraising Account created to save as much finances as possible for future renovations and especially keeping in mind the plan to build a Hall in the near future.

The meeting was followed by lovely meal with the members of Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Council.

Observation:

As your Parish is looking to build a Hall in the near future, I encourage you also to consider having fund-raising activities that might support your newly created Fundraising Account.

SATURDAY MORNING – Those involved in Ministries

Meeting with those involved in ministries. There are various ministry coordinators who oversee the groups. There are over 280 volunteers across the parish.

You place much emphasis on welcoming and especially having volunteers at the Eucharist where you have 35- 40 volunteers.

The Music ministry includes 6 liturgical choirs in the parish and there is a choir at all the Sunday liturgies.

There are those who bring Communion to the sick and homebound with 17 Parishioners being visited regularly. There are a total of 60 + Lectors in the parish.

Your Ablaze Youth and Ablaze Young Adults Group are life-giving presence for your parish dedicated team of leaders. Youth Alpha is also supported by volunteers.

A new ministry is beginning – Grief & Bereavement Ministry.

Your St Vincent de Paul group is supporting needy people both in parish and within the broader Caroline Springs community. There are those of you who are also involved in the Soup Van Team on every Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

You have a strong Legion of Mary group, a charismatic prayer group and a men's group that meets monthly.

Observation:

There is a real sense of involvement by parishioners in the life of the parish with so many volunteers and you are still needing more as you continue to grow and invite more into your faith community. I am conscious that the above mentioned is but a fraction of the various parish groups already involved.

Commend:

I commend you in having ministry coordinators and as a structure being linked to the Parish Leadership Team. It is wonderful to see so many volunteers serving the parish and beyond to the wider community. There is obviously a generosity of spirit being shown both within the parish and towards those in need within the broader community.

Recommend:

Involvement in the Parish community and within the various parish groups is a key element in deepening and enhancing our faith as disciples of Jesus and to strengthen the faith of the community. At the same time, the ultimate aim of having a vibrant community of faith, is also to reach out in mission to the world – our families, our workplaces and our broader community. Being outward orientated, is to continue to embrace Christ's mission in the world and being bearers of Hope. An example of this is one of our final proclamations in the Eucharist is *"Go forth the Mass is ended."*

COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING:

Catherine of Siena Parish has a vibrant Community with many volunteers. There is a continual effort being made to foster a real culture of safety for the young and vulnerable. Safe guarding measures have been put in place for altar serving and children's liturgy. All adult altar servers have Working with Children checks. All adults working with youth groups are compliant with the safeguarding requirements. Your altar servers now have their own separate change rooms.

Commend:

Given that you have over 280 volunteers, I commend your efforts in ensuring that all are compliant in regard to safeguarding protocols. Your Safeguarding Officer has in recent times conducted an in person Safeguarding Essential training session for around 20 volunteers. You are showing ongoing signs of improving the compliance rate within your overall volunteer group.

Recommend:

Given the growth of your faith community, I encourage you to have a small team of volunteers led by your Safeguarding Officer to oversee the ongoing work of creating a culture of Safeguarding compliance being strengthened across your community of faith. I also encourage you to have written risk assessments for the programs that are being held.

MORNING TEA:

The morning session was followed by morning tea.

PARISH FORUM

The forum was attended by 20-25 people. Since the beginning your parish in 2006, you spoke of the continued growth and much parish involvement of parishioners of many different nationalities. This has been taking place over the 20 years of its existence. In the last 5 years or so this has become more so as you embrace a more missionary outreach to others. Members of the Parish Leadership Team shared the five pillars that are essential in being a parish embracing the missionary renewal of your faith community. You speak of having a great sense of belonging and welcome. Some miss the working bees which had good numbers and engendered good fellowship with other parishioners. Yet, now you believe there is even more fellowship and the various ministries have helped this too. You believe that the Parish leadership team has been instrumental in growing a much closer bond between parishioners within your faith community. A number of you shared how much their parish contributes and nourishes their faith.

The Alpha program has played a significant role in developing people's faith and some shared their story of discovering a renewed sense of their own personal faith, leading to a greater sense of commitment to the parish. You believe that this must continue. You spoke of the importance of the Sunday mass and the various kinds of music and hymns, including some Latin hymns in some of the masses. In the midst of all these discussions there is a desire to make people's faith come alive and the gathering on a Sunday plays a big part in this.

In recent times you have sent a number of your parishioner leaders/members to be part of The Bethany Way retreat held by our Archdiocese. This is showing your desire to have faith filled leaders who are disciples of Jesus and can be encouraging of others to grow in the faith and in the sharing of their gifts within the parish.

Observation:

One of the challenges that was mentioned was how to link the active groups of young people into the parish and linking them into the overall faith community and ministries in the parish.

Commend:

I was very much taken by the deep level of faith commitment being shared and wanting this to nurture and grow in the parish. The work of your Parish Priest with the members of your Parish Leadership Team is providing consistent focus on this. Indeed, they are responding to your parish Vision Statement 'To be a welcoming and dynamic faith-filled Catholic community, living and sharing the Gospel, to set the world ablaze'.

Recommend:

Your five pillars for becoming a vibrant parish are Worship, Proclamation of the Gospel within and beyond the parish, fellowship, discipleship (deepening people's sense of their faith) and service. I encourage you to continue to keep embracing these areas for the missionary renewal of your parish community.

VISITS TO HOMES:

Following a light lunch in the presbytery, Fr Richard and I visit two homes, distributing Holy Communion with those present and spending some time with them.

MEETING WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS GROUP:

At 5pm a meeting took place with some of the youth and young adult's group. It was good to hear about the lives of these young people and their hopes for the future and how their relationship with the Lord plays an important part in all of this. They are also looking forward to ACYF – Australian Catholic Youth Festival in late November and early December.

6pm VIGIL MASS:

Being able to celebrate the Eucharist with you was a special part of the Visitation time for me as it was celebrating the heart of your faith. A large number attended the evening mass and singing some of the hymns and parts of the mass in Latin was part of this mass. It was good to be able to meet with parishioners after mass

EVENING MEAL:

Following the mass, a dinner was held with all the Ministry Coordinators, the pioneers of the parish, parishioners who have been part of the community from its foundation, at a local hotel. Over forty attended the evening meal. It was really good to be able to spend time with those present and to acknowledge their contribution to the parish.

SUNDAY MORNING MASSES:

Your Sunday morning masses 8:30am, 10:30am and 12:00pm have large congregations, accompanied with liturgical music and singing.

Observation:

An increasing number of people are attending mass in your parish, which is a result of your own efforts in creating a more welcoming faith community and also of the continued growth of new families moving into your area from Caroline Springs itself and from surrounding areas.

Commend:

It was wonderful to see the number of parishioners involved in music ministry in the parish. There were also volunteers who welcomed mass goers and there were volunteers

assisting with morning tea after mass. I appreciated very much the opportunity to greet parishioners following the morning masses.

SUNDAY LUNCH:

Following the last Mass, Fr. Richard and I had lunch together at the Presbytery.

SITE REVIEW:

The Presbytery built in 2009 is quite a large building with four bedrooms, an open kitchen, dining and a lounge area. It is very well proportioned and in good condition. The parish offices while within the overall building itself are separated from the priest's quarters.

St Catherine of Siena Church which was opened in 2013 has large numbers of people attending. There is also a gathering space at the back for children's liturgy of the Word and people to attend parish group meetings. It is now struggling to hold the numbers of parishioners that are coming to mass and other liturgical events. There are presently plans being considered to try and create more room within the Church space itself. At the same time there is an understanding that a new church will need to be built in the near future in another other part of the parish.

Given the parish's lack of space to have meetings and gatherings, there is are now plans being developed to build a hall near to the side of the church. Catholic Regional College where possible have been generous in providing space for parish meetings and other activities.

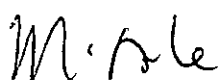
YOUR PARISH PRIEST:

Your Parish Priest, Fr Richard Rosse is recognized by you as a very zealous pastor who has a love for his community. He is a leader who is committed to growing the faith community and willingly embraces the challenges that are there in this relatively new parish and which is continuing to grow. He is a leader who welcomes all and encourages parishioners to place their gifts at the service of the community. He is committed to sharing responsibility with others in enabling the parish to grow as a faith community and at the same time to be outward focused in its missionary renewal. During my time with you, you have spoken of the gratitude you have for his priestly presence in your midst and the generosity of his commitment to you.

I am grateful to you for your welcome and hospitality shown to me during the days of my visitation. I thank you for the many ways you shared the life of your faith and how much you love and have a real sense of belonging to St Catherine of Siena Parish. May you continue to proclaim and live out the hope you have as a Christ-centered community not only for each other but also for the broader community. May your witness of hope touch the lives of many within the larger Caroline Springs community as you go forward into the future.

May the Lord bless you and all your families.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



+Martin Ashe
Auxiliary Bishop for the Western Region