



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

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Social outreach leader to become Bishop of Cairns

Pope Francis has this evening appointed the Very Reverend Joe Caddy AM VG, a priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, to be the 12th Bishop of Cairns.

Fr Joe, 64, was born and raised in Melbourne and ordained to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1990.

He holds a Bachelor of Theology from the Melbourne College of Divinity and degrees in Social Sciences from the Gregorian University in Rome, where he studied Catholic social teaching, social ethics and economics.

From 2002 to 2013 he served as part-time chaplain in the prison ministry team, providing the Sunday worship service and pastoral care to prisoners and their families in Melbourne's men's maximum-security prisons.

He served as CEO of CatholicCare (Greater Melbourne, Geelong and Gippsland) from 2004 to 2017, during which time he advised the Victorian and federal governments, Australian Council of Social Service, and other bodies on a range of issues including homelessness, juvenile justice and local government.

In June 2018, Fr Joe was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list with an Order of Australia Medal in the General Division for "significant service to the community through a wide range of social welfare initiatives and policy reforms, the Catholic Church in Australia".

"The news of the appointment of Father Joe Caddy as the next bishop of Cairns will be greeted by the Catholic community in Cairns with great joy and a sense of expectation and renewed hope," said Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB.

"Fr Joe brings to this new mission and ministry a wealth of experience and many gifts which he will now put at the service of the people of his new diocese.

"He has, in recent years, served as Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and prior to this has been deeply involved in parish ministry and in the life and mission of the social outreach arm of the archdiocese. His many pastoral gifts will be deeply appreciated in Cairns.

"On behalf of the bishops of Australia I welcome Fr Joe among us as a brother and a friend. He will enrich the life and work of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and we look forward to his presence among us. I invite all members of the Catholic community in Australia to join in prayer with and for Fr Joe as he now prepares to take up this new role."

Fr Joe thanked Cairns diocesan administrator Fr Kerry Crowley, the clergy, lay staff, and people of the Diocese of Cairns, for the care they had taken since the retirement of Bishop James Foley two years ago.

“The request from Pope Francis came unexpectedly, coming completely out of the blue – yet the prospect fills me with joy because I know that the country and waterways of Far North Queensland are some of the most beautiful country in Australia,” he said.

“Even more importantly I have experienced the warmth, generosity and hospitality of the people there.

“I realise that I will have a lot to learn as I visit the parishes and communities of the diocese. I look forward to this learning, as together we seek to uncover the presence and power of the liberating Christ in the lives of the people and communities of Far North Queensland.

“For now, my prayer is that the Good Lord will continue to guide, protect and bless us all.”

BACKGROUND

Bishop James Foley retired as Bishop of Cairns in August 2022, having been appointed to the role in July 1992.

About 24 per cent of the Cairns population is affiliated with the Catholic church.

The Diocese of Cairns covers around 380,000 square kilometres (147,000 square miles) of north Queensland – an area the size of Japan.

The Cairns area was declared an “apostolic vicariate” in 1877 – a form of Roman Catholic Church territorial jurisdiction established in missionary regions and countries where a diocese has not yet been formed. It was constituted a diocese in 1941.