



Ordination of Dean Chisholm – A Joyful Milestone for the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed till 8.30pm - 23 October 2025 September 2025

Darwin, Northern Territory

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Ordination Thursday, 23 October 2025 – 6.30pm, St Mary’s Star of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin

The Catholic Diocese of Darwin and the Northern Territory rejoices in the ordination of **Mr Dean Chisholm** as a **Permanent Deacon of the Catholic Church**, marking a moment of deep significance for the Church and community in the Northern Territory.

After a long period of prayer, discernment, and preparation, Dean - a proud Aboriginal man, devoted husband to **Melissa**, and loving father – has been ordained to serve God and God’s people. His ministry reflects the faith and wisdom born from family life, community service, and cultural heritage.

Dean has had a journey of growth in faith. Having previously served as the Catholic Dean at **Nungalinnya College**, he has ministered for many years among the community of **St Martin de Porres Catholic Community**, where he will continue to serve following.

“This ordination is not only a personal milestone for Dean and his family,” said **Bishop Charles Gauci**, “it is also a moment of great pride and joy for the whole Church in the Northern Territory. Dean joins a rich tradition of Aboriginal men who have answered the call to serve as permanent deacons.”

The celebration at St Mary’s Cathedral beautifully reflected the unity of faith and culture, with Aboriginal cultural expressions woven throughout the liturgy. The Tiwi dancers opened the Mass in joyful prayer and welcome, and Dean and the clergy were received through a **Smoking Ceremony** - a sacred act of cleansing and preparation honouring God, the land, and its First Peoples.

A special moment in the ceremony saw Dean’s wife, **Melissa**, presented with the **deacon’s stole**, designed and painted by local Arrernte woman, Paula Turner and rich in meaning. The stole’s theme, *kwatye* (water), reflects Dean’s mother’s **Eastern Arrernte** heritage — the desert colours speaking of country, the blue circles representing kinship, and the great circles symbolising the **Holy Trinity**, the source of life and mission.



The ordination rite, celebrated through the laying on of hands — a tradition handed down from the Apostles — signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit and the deacon’s mission to serve in the ministries of **liturgy, word, and charity**. Deacons are called to baptise, proclaim the Gospel, assist at the Eucharist, bless marriages, and bring God’s compassion to the sick, the poor, and the dying.

As the sixth Aboriginal man ordained to the permanent diaconate in the Northern Territory, Dean’s ordination continues a proud and faith-filled legacy of Aboriginal leadership and service in the Catholic Church.

The Diocese extends heartfelt congratulations and every blessing to **Deacon Dean Chisholm, Melissa, and their family**, as he begins his new ministry in the service of God and God’s people.

The Ordination will be livestreamed on the Diocesan Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/darwindioecese>

Photos will be available on request to: comms@darwin.catholic.org.au

For further information, contact: [✉ diocadmin@darwin.catholic.org.au](mailto:diocadmin@darwin.catholic.org.au)