



For all things give thanks.

1 THESS 5:18

Pastoral letter from Bishop Brian Mascord

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ

I write to you today about a very serious matter involving a former parish priest of St Francis of Assisi Warrawong and St Mary's Berkeley.

Fr Martin Mai OFM Conv, a priest of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, has appeared before Wollongong Court on Wednesday 9 November 2022 where he is facing charges related to allegations of sexual offences against an adult. Fr Martin has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Fr Martin was parish priest at Warrawong and Berkeley between 2016 and 2020. The Diocese of Wollongong was first made aware of an allegation against Fr Martin at the end of November 2020. The diocese reported the allegation to NSW Police and Fr Martin was removed from his position as parish priest and had his faculties to minister in the diocese withdrawn.

Since that time, the matter has been managed by various law enforcement agencies. Since first reporting the allegations to police, the diocese has consistently engaged with police, both proactively and in response to requests.

I understand this announcement may cause some distress. Our diocese, along with Catholic dioceses across Australia, has extensive measures and safeguards in place to protect and support all people who engage in any way with diocesan personnel to ensure that we learn from the lessons of the past and safeguard the future. We continue to review and revise our practices to ensure the safeguarding of the most vulnerable.

As always, we stand together with Pope Francis who recently reaffirmed the Catholic Church's position that "abuse in any form is unacceptable", and we strongly urge any person with any complaint of mistreatment or abuse to contact the police. If you need assistance in contacting police, please contact the diocesan Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding by emailing safeguarding@dow.org.au or via phone on 0408 512 163.

As Australians, we also believe in the justice system and the underpinning principles of the rule of law, including the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial. As this matter is still before the courts, it is not appropriate for the diocese to make any further comment at this time.

We are wholeheartedly committed to supporting people impacted by matters of this nature, and encourage anyone who would like to access support to contact our Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding.

I invite you to join me in praying for all those impacted by this matter.

Yours in Christ

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

9 November 2022

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