Journeying together
IN FAITH & MISSION
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG
News and events from the Diocese of Wollongong
VOL. 1 NO. 4 • NOVEMBER 2026

A Year of Hope, A Future of Renewal

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we near the end of 2026, I reflect with deep gratitude on the many reasons to be hopeful about the future of our Church. Throughout this year, we have witnessed wonderful signs of the Holy Spirit at work in our diocese.

Signs of the Spirit at work

At Easter, we celebrated a record number of people becoming Catholic in our diocese. Since then, I have been especially encouraged by reports of dozens of young people in our Catholic high schools making their own decision to enter the Church. Behind every decision is a story of faith, of searching, and of encountering Jesus Christ. What a wonderful reminder that the Gospel continues to stir hearts and transform lives!

In September, we celebrated the ordination of Fr Seth Harsh to the priesthood, a tremendous blessing for our diocese and a beautiful witness to a life generously given in service of Christ and his Church.

That same month, we welcomed the major relic of St Carlo Acutis to communities throughout our diocese. Seeing so many people, especially the young, gather in prayer and be inspired by this young saint was another powerful reminder of how God can use his saints to draw people into relationship with Christ.

Gathered for renewal

Yet perhaps the greatest expression of this hope came in October, when we gathered for Renewed & Sent, our Parish Renewal Summit, in partnership with Divine Renovation.



Rite of Election (February 2026)





Ordination of Rev Seth Harsh







St Carlo Acutis Major Pilgrim Relic Mission

What an extraordinary few days! Lay faithful, religious, priests, deacons and bishops, from 26 dioceses across Australia, together with delegates from New Zealand, Fiji and the Philippines, came together, united by a shared conviction that our parishes can be places of vibrant faith, genuine community and missionary discipleship. We prayed together, listened, learned, shared our struggles and had the courage to dream about what God might be calling our parishes to become.

I was particularly proud of the 80 parish volunteers from across the Macarthur region, whose extraordinary generosity and hospitality helped make this gathering possible. What a wonderful witness that our own parishioners could help provide such a significant experience for the wider Church across Australasia! Their joyful service was itself a beautiful expression of the missionary discipleship we had gathered to explore.

Renewal begins in each of us

At the heart of the Summit was a simple but profound truth: renewal must begin in each of us. Before we ask what needs to change in our parishes, we must first be willing to allow the Lord to change our own hearts. Renewal is not simply about new programmes, better structures or doing more. It begins with a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ, a willingness to be transformed by his love, and a desire to follow wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

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"Renewed & Sent" Parish Renewal Summit 2026 (photos courtesy of Divine Renovation)

I was truly encouraged by the faith and generosity of those who gathered, particularly the openness of our priests and the many testimonies of lives and communities already being transformed. The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly encouraging, particularly regarding the impact of the teaching and the practical wisdom shared. There was a genuine hunger for renewal, not simply to make our parishes busier or more successful, but to help them become what God intends them to be: communities where people encounter Jesus Christ, grow as his disciples and are sent to share his love with the world.

Taking the next step

Of course, the Summit was never intended to be an end in itself. The real work of renewal happens as each of us responds to God's invitation, and in the ordinary and sometimes difficult decisions we make together to pray, listen, change and take the next faithful step. What we experienced together must now find expression in the life of our communities.

Christian hope is not wishful thinking or the belief that everything will somehow work out. Our hope rests in Jesus Christ, who is risen, who remains faithful to his Church, and who continues to make all things new.

As we look towards Advent and the new liturgical year, I pray that we carry this hope into our parishes, schools, and pastoral works. May we be grateful for what God has begun, courageous in responding to his invitation, and confident that the Holy Spirit is still at work among us.

Yours in Christ

+Brian Mascord

Most Rev Brian G Mascord

Bishop Brian's prayer intentions

- That the coming Advent and Christmas season be an opportunity for invitation and welcome to those absent from our parishes.
- That the fruits of the Parish Renewal Summit be many parishes embracing authentic outreach and many people encountering Jesus in our communities.
- That our Diamond Jubilee be a time for celebrating the past and emboldening us for renewed mission
- That our journey towards the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress may renew our sense of wonder and awe as we encounter Jesus at Mass.



The installation of Bishop Thomas McCabe as the first Bishop of Wollongong at St Francis Xavier Cathedral, 1952.

75 Years On: What Kind of Church Are We Becoming?

When Bishop Thomas McCabe was welcomed as Wollongong's first bishop in 1952, he challenged the faithful to "live your Catholic faith every moment of your lives". Seventy-five years on, those words remain a fitting invitation as our diocese looks towards 2027.

Our Diamond Jubilee offers a chance to give thanks for generations of clergy, religious and lay people whose often unseen faithfulness has shaped our parishes, schools and communities. There will be much to celebrate, including the quieter stories. But anniversaries aren't only about looking back. They also ask what we're handing on.

October's *Renewed & Sent* Parish Renewal Summit offered a glimpse of that future. I was particularly encouraged by the sense of community among those gathered, the beauty of the liturgies and the inspiring messages we heard, especially from Bishop Brian. There was something powerful about experiencing all of this together. It reminded me how much we have to offer one another, and what becomes possible when we gather in faith, encourage one another and work towards a common mission.

Across Australia, 2027 will be the *Year of Worship* as we prepare for the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney. Following 2026's Year of Prayer, we're invited to encounter the Eucharist as "A Mystery to be Celebrated". The Eucharist forms us as one body and sends us to make Jesus known and loved.

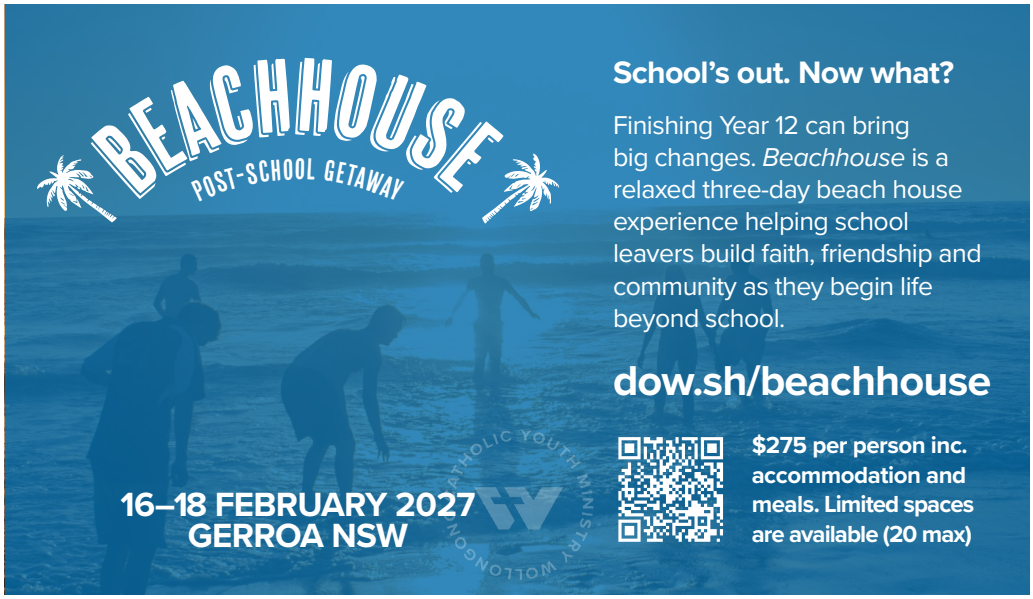
We're also invited to embrace the Church's synodal journey. Pope Leo XIV has described synodality as "not a campaign" but "a way of being". As we look towards 2027, we can put this into practice both through organised gatherings and in our everyday lives by listening honestly to one another, especially those whose voices are not always heard, and discerning where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

Our centenary in 2051 may feel distant, but the Church that will gather then is being shaped by how faithfully we follow God's call now. Will our parishes be communities of welcome, discipleship and outreach? Will those searching find a place, a listening ear and an invitation to encounter Christ?

We can't foresee the next 25 years. But by listening to the Holy Spirit, and to one another, we can play our part in advancing God's plan for the Church, both today and for generations to come.

Matt Baxter
Executive Director and Chancellor, Diocese of Wollongong







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Around the diocese

MAJOR DIOCESAN EVENTS

14 Nov: Diocesan Diamond Jubilee Opening Mass, 11.30am, St John Vianney Co-Cathedral, Fairy Meadow

21 Nov: Annual Catechist Mass, 10am, St Francis Xavier Cathedral

FORMATION

3 & 4 Nov: Parish Renewal Formation: *How Words Shape Culture*, Campbelltown and Wollongong

20 Nov: Men's Prayer Breakfast with Dr Robert Haddad: *Battle Ready*, 6.30–8am, Wollongong

5 Feb 2027: Level 1 Catechist Training begins, Rosemeadow

8 Feb 2027: Level 1 Catechist Training begins, Wollongong

YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS & FAMILIES

18 Nov: Sanctus Summit: Holy Hour & Dinner, Unanderra

28 Nov: Youth Leaders' End-of-Year Celebration

28 Nov: National Life Summit, Brisbane

5 Dec: Vocaris #4: *Seven Deadly Sins* & Movie Night, 6–9.30pm

12 Dec: Ephphatha: Priestly Vocation Discernment Day

16 Dec: Sanctus Summit: Holy Hour & Dinner, Rosemeadow

16–18 Feb 2027: *Beachhouse*: Post-School Getaway for Year 12 Graduates

SPECIAL DATES / WEEKS

8 Nov: Prison Sunday

15 Nov: World Day of the Poor

22 Nov: Christ the King

29 Nov: First Sunday of Advent

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MORE INFORMATION
helen.bennett@dow.org.au
(02) 4222 2403