



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Michael Morrissey takes place in Geraldton

Media release

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The Most Reverend Michael Morrissey was ordained the ninth Bishop of Geraldton on the eve of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Wednesday 28 June at Nagle Catholic College Gymnasium, Geraldton.

The Archbishop of Perth, the Most Reverend Timothy Costelloe SDB, was the Principal Ordaining Bishop. The Principal co-consecrating Bishops were Emeritus Archbishop of Perth and the seventh Bishop of Geraldton, the Most Reverend Barry Hickey and the Most Reverend, Justin Bianchini, Bishop Emeritus of Geraldton. The Apostolic Nuncio in Australia, His Excellency the Most Reverend Adolfo Tito Yllana read the Papal Bull in Latin followed by a translation in English.

Bishop-Elect Morrissey is the first Bishop of Geraldton who was born, raised, ordained and ministered in the Diocese and said his appointment recognises all the small communities scattered throughout the diocese

Held in the gymnasium of Nagle Catholic College while St Francis Xavier Cathedral is undergoing renovations, Kathy Councillor extended a Welcome to Country to Bishop-elect Morrissey and the assembled Archbishops and Bishops on behalf of the Naaguja people.

Born in Yalgoo on 9 September 1952, Bishop-Elect Morrissey received his primary school education via Correspondence and School of the Air lessons supervised by his Mother, Margaret Morrissey. Secondary education was received at Aquinas College, Perth. He continued his studies at St Charles Seminary in Perth and at St Francis Xavier Seminary, Adelaide. He was ordained a priest on 31 January 1981 in St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Geraldton. From 1981 to 1984, he worked as Assistant Priest in the Parishes of Bluff Point and Port Hedland. He served as Administrator in the Parishes of Bluff Point, Port Hedland and South Hedland between 1984 and 1985.

The new bishop adopted as his motto, "Trust in the Lord" from Proverbs 3:5, saying that it will remind him of how to be a Bishop with the continuing words, "Do not lean on your own understanding".

In his homily for the occasion, Archbishop Costelloe said that for someone who grew up on a sheep station near Yalgoo, the new bishop will hardly need an explanation of what sheep are like or what shepherds do. "He will have a deep instinctive understanding of what it means to talk about the pastoral role of the Bishop and why Jesus himself understood his life and ministry in such terms," Archbishop Costelloe said.

"It is of course through the powerful presence of God's Spirit, acting through this sacrament of Holy Orders, that our new bishop will be not just commissioned but enabled by God's grace to be all that the Lord and his Church requires of him as a bishop, a successor of the apostles, in this diocese and in the Church," Archbishop Costelloe said.

"Bishop Michael, through the grace of this sacrament of God's provident love, you will be remoulded, reshaped, into a living image of the presence of the one true Good Shepherd

among his people. In this sense the words of Saint John the Baptist in reference to Jesus must hold good for you as well: *He, Jesus, must grow greater and I must grow smaller,*” he said.

Following his ordination, Bishop Morrissey said it is with a sense of joy, and hope, and ‘Trust in the Lord’, that he has accepted this new ministry.

“To paraphrase Hebrews 12:1, I am surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses to the faith, who have been an important part of my life as a Priest,” Bishop Morrissey said.

“At this time our Church is weighed down and under intense scrutiny because of failures in being true to the Gospel by individual members of the Church. This affects us all and could have caused me to hesitate in accepting this call to be your Bishop. However, I found hope and encouragement through the lives of Saints Peter and Paul.

“Peter, in the midst of his failure to stand up for Jesus in his hour of need, received the Grace to change. Paul, through the power of the Spirit and with his rich understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, knew he had to change. We will have to change as a Church and especially in the way we lead. Pope Francis calls us to listen with humility and accept our failures of leadership,” he said.

He paid tribute, together with fellow Bishops present for the occasion, to Bishop Justin Bianchini for his service as the eighth Bishop of Geraldton for 25 years, from May 1992 till now.

“Following in Bishop Justin Bianchini’s footsteps is very special, having worked closely with him for the past 25 years,” Bishop Morrissey said. “I hope to continue the legacy of Bishop Justin, listening to the people and seeing where they would like to go in their faith and life.”

The Diocese of Geraldton encompasses the mid-western section of the state of Western Australia, is one of the world’s largest dioceses in territorial terms, covering an area of 1.3 million square kilometres, from Port Hedland in the North to Leeman in the south to the Northern Territory and South Australian borders. The Catholic population of 29, 300 people live in 16 parishes and 24 missions, which are served by 18 parish priests and assistant priests, 35 religious and three seminarians.

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