

EMBARGOED UNTIL
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Diocese of Wollongong set to produce Network Ten's *Mass For You At Home*

The Diocese of Wollongong is set to become the new producer of *Mass for You at Home*, beaming Mass into people's living rooms across the country each week from Easter Sunday, 2021.

Mass has been broadcast on free-to-air television for decades, providing spiritual nourishment for people who are not able to attend Mass in person for a range of reasons. With COVID-19 restrictions dramatically increasing the number of people in this situation, the need for virtually accessible worship services has never been greater.

Bishop of Wollongong, Most Rev Brian Mascord DD said the diocese was very excited to be entrusted with producing Mass for people who are homebound, without internet, or in prison, aged care facilities and hospitals, as well as those flicking through the channels on a Sunday morning.

"In parishes across the country, people are trying their best to make the celebration of the Mass something that is beautiful, prayerful and a source of strength," he said.

"Those principles, which sound simple and yet are profound, will be the motivation for our team's production, which will seek to deliver an experience that comforts, inspires and uplifts people."

Debra Vermeer, the interim chair of the *Mass for You at Home* National Transition Committee, said it was heartening to see interest from multiple dioceses during the tender process.

"The Diocese of Wollongong is not alone in having created high-quality Masses for online viewing while people were homebound during the pandemic," Mrs Vermeer said.

"Wollongong has, however, been outstanding in the production of audio-visual material for many years, and we're delighted that the diocese is willing to take on this challenge."

Bishop Mascord expressed his gratitude to Melbourne Archdiocese, which provided online Masses while the Wollongong Diocese paused its own online production to focus on the tender process. He said the diocese's production team is aware of the significant work that has previously gone into producing *Mass for You at Home* and takes seriously the responsibility of carrying forward that legacy.

Mass for You at Home, which is highly valued by the deaf community thanks to the inclusion of AUSLAN interpreters, had previously been broadcast on free-to-air television at no charge. However, a change to the religious programming quotas for commercial channels several years ago saw the cost of broadcasting and production increase from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mrs Vermeer said a fundraising campaign for the production of the Mass will launch soon.

"While the future of *Mass for You at Home* was precarious late last year, its continuation was a source of joy for many people. We will shortly be inviting supporters and others within the Catholic community to help keep Sunday Mass on free-to-air television this year and beyond" she said.

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