



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishop Kennedy appointed Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pope Francis has appointed Bishop Michael Kennedy, who has led the Diocese of Armidale in regional New South Wales since 2012, the new Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has been without a bishop since the death of Bishop Bill Wright in November 2021, with Fr Greg Barker serving as diocesan administrator in the intervening period.

Bishop Kennedy was born and raised in Wagga Wagga, NSW. After completing tertiary study, he taught at Albury's Xavier Catholic College for three years. He entered Vianney College, the Wagga Wagga diocesan seminary, in 1992 and carried out some of his academic studies in Rome. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in 1999.

In 2011, he was appointed Bishop of Armidale, and was ordained bishop in February 2012.

Bishop Kennedy said he accepts his new appointment "willingly and heartily ... knowing that like all new endeavours, it will hold both joys and challenges".

"To be the chief pastor leading a diocese in worship, teaching, evangelisation and governance is an awesome privilege and responsibility," he said.

"It is one I will undertake in Maitland-Newcastle with trust in God and with confidence in the cooperation of the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the diocese. All of us, through Baptism, share the right and duty to proclaim Jesus Christ and the Gospel of God's love and salvation to all."

Bishop Kennedy said he will hold the Diocese of Armidale "in a special place in my heart for the rest of my life".

"I assure the people of both dioceses of my prayers for them and ask your prayers in return," he said. "Please pray that I be a true shepherd in the image of Jesus Christ, and that all together we will live the joy of the Gospel united in faith and love."

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB welcomed Bishop Kennedy's appointment to lead the Church in the New South Wales Hunter region.

"Bishop Kennedy has for 11 years committed himself generously to the service of the Catholic community in the Diocese of Armidale and has been a significant contributor to the Bishops Conference over that time," he said.

"His pastoral care for the people he serves will, I am sure, be greatly appreciated by the faithful in Maitland-Newcastle as he takes up his new role."

Fr Barker said the people of Maitland-Newcastle are pleased to welcome Bishop Kennedy.

"It is an exciting time, this time of welcome and transition," he said. "Bishop Michael comes with a wealth of experience from his service in the Diocese of Armidale. This will certainly help Maitland-Newcastle in the next part of our journey.

"I look forward with great excitement to Bishop Michael's installation and leadership."

Archbishop Costelloe acknowledged Fr Barker "for his active participation in the work of the Bishops Conference since the death of Bishop Bill Wright".

The date for Bishop Kennedy's installation as Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle is not yet known. Fr Barker will remain diocesan administrator until that time.