

24 May, 2023

STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 8:00PM WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2023

POPE FRANCIS NAMES NEW BISHOP FOR CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF TOOWOOMBA

The Holy Father has appointed Bishop Ken Howell, currently an Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Brisbane, as the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Toowoomba. Pope Francis made the official announcement in Rome at noon (8:00 pm local time) on Wednesday, 24 May 2023. The appointment follows the retirement of Bishop Robert McGuckin, who has served the Toowoomba Diocese since his Episcopal Ordination on 11 July 2012.

“I am deeply humbled to be called by Pope Francis to shepherd this local Church and I thank him sincerely.” Bishop Howell said of his new role. “I realise that I have been given a great responsibility to care for the faithful and to engage in the life of the broader community across the Diocese.”

Born in 1958, Bishop Ken Howell was educated at St James College, Fortitude Valley. He joined Queensland Rail after his school years working as a clerk in the Chief Engineers Office.

In 1977 he entered Pius XII Regional Seminary and was ordained 24 June 1983. Until 1994, he served as Assistant Priest in the Parishes of Noosa Districts, Burleigh Heads and the Cathedral, Brisbane.

Between 1994 and 1997, he completed a Licentiate in Sacred Liturgy at the Pontifical Institute Sant’Anselmo in Rome. He served as Secretary to Archbishop John Bathersby from 1997 to 2010. During this time, Bishop Howell served at the Cathedral in various capacities. He was Vice Rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary between 2002 and 2008. In 2009, he took on a concurrent appointment as Administrator of St Mary’s Parish, South Brisbane. In 2013 he became the Parish Priest at Burleigh Heads.

On 29 March 2017, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Howell as Auxiliary Bishop of the Brisbane Archdiocese. His Episcopal Ordination was held on 14 June 2017.

Bishop McGuckin’s retirement comes in the lead up to his anniversary as Bishop of the Toowoomba Diocese. “I have been privileged to have been the Bishop of Toowoomba for these past 11 years,” he said. “I am very pleased to congratulate Bishop Ken Howell on his appointment to Toowoomba by Pope Francis. I wish Bishop Ken every blessing as he takes up his pastoral ministry in this vast and special Diocese. The people of the Archdiocese of Brisbane will be sad at loosing Bishop Ken but rest assured Bishop Ken will be warmly welcomed to Toowoomba.”

The diocesan community is thankful for Bishop McGuckin’s guidance and commitment to the local church community.

“On behalf of the staff, students and families of Toowoomba Catholic Schools, I express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Bishop Robert for his outstanding leadership and dedicated service to the

Diocese over the past 10 plus years.” said Dr Pat Coughlan, Executive Director: Catholic Schools. “Bishop Robert has been incredibly supportive of the work of the 33 Catholic schools and the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office across the vast Diocese and advocated strongly for the unique educational needs of students in rural and remote locations.

“We look forward to extending a warm welcome to the new Bishop, who will build on Bishop Robert’s substantial legacy.”

Bishop Howell doesn’t come to the Toowoomba Diocese as a stranger, citing family ties to the region and knowing many of the priests. “As I prepare to move to my new home, I come with a desire to listen to God’s people and to understand and grow in love for the mission of this local Church. It is my firm hope that I may accompany the community of the Church of Toowoomba, as together we seek to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world.” Bishop Howell said.

“Can I ask all the people of the Diocese to pray for me as I prepare to be with you. Your prayer will be my greatest support.”

Bishop Howell’s installation as the seventh Bishop of Toowoomba will be held on 11 July 2023 at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Toowoomba.

Both Bishop Robert McGuckin and Bishop Ken Howell will be available for interview or comment on 25 May 2023 from 9:00am at Bishop’s House, 73 Margaret Street Toowoomba. A morning tea with staff is planned for 10:00am.

Please call Ingrid McTaggart (Toowoomba Media Contact) to arrange interview time.

IMAGES:

Bishops Handshake 1_JH.jpg L to R: Bishop Ken Howell and Bishop Robert McGuckin, Photo supplied by The Catholic Leader.

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