



# Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

## MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 27 March 2023

Media contact: Katrina Strong, 0419 015 696. [Katrina.strong@sandhurst.catholic.org.au](mailto:Katrina.strong@sandhurst.catholic.org.au)

---

## 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DIOCESE OF SANDHURST 30 MARCH 2024

Hundreds of Pilgrims walked from St Kilian's Church to Sacred Heart Cathedral on Sunday 26 March to launch the start of the [Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst's](#) 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

30 March marks 150 years since the canonical establishment of the Diocese which was formed from four mission stations (Bendigo — known as Sandhurst at the time — Heathcote, Beechworth and Wangaratta).

The first Mass in Bendigo was celebrated in a tent on the banks of the Bendigo Creek over 170 years ago.

Today the Diocese is home to 85,000 Catholics, forty parishes, 56 schools, six nursing homes and one hospital; and spans over 450,100 square kilometres in northern Victoria — from Heathcote to Cohuna to Corryong and Mount Beauty.

The Jubilee celebrations commenced with a Pilgrimage from [St Kilian's Church](#) to [Sacred Heart Cathedral](#) on Sunday 24 March tracing part of the Diocese's history.

As there was no Cathedral when the Diocese was established, St Kilian's Church became the pro-cathedral (a temporary cathedral) until Sacred Heart Cathedral was opened in 1901.

Pilgrims gathered at St Kilian's Church and were welcomed Country by Troy Firebrace, Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta man. Bishop Shane Mackinlay then blessed a specially commissioned [Processional Cross](#) and Pilgrims before they processed through Bendigo to Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The Jubilee Year was officially inaugurated by Bishop Shane with the ceremonial opening of the Cathedral's Jubilee Door (or Holy Door). Pilgrims followed the Bishop, Clergy and Choir through the Jubilee Door proclaiming Jesus as opening the way to God's love.

In his Homily at the Chrism Mass on 26 March 2024, Bishop Shane noted that, although much has changed in the 150 years since the Diocese was established, the mission of the Church and the Christian people has remained constant:



*“A mission to bring good news to the poor; to bind up hearts which are broken; ... to set the downtrodden free; to bring care and encouragement to those who are struggling ... This has always been the mission of the Christian people. It has been the mission of the local Church in this place throughout our history and continues to be our mission today.”*

Bishop Shane emphasised the importance of each generation of Christians living out their mission by responding to the blessings and challenges of their times in ways that are relevant.

Bishop Shane suggested key issues which Catholics need to focus on today include the provision of community and church services in towns subject to regional decline, isolation and loneliness despite advances in communications technology, reconciliation with Indigenous Australians and care for our common home.

END:

- 2 May 1852: The first public Catholic Mass in the Diocese was celebrated by Rev. Dr Henry Backhaus near the banks of the Bendigo Creek in Golden Square.
- 30 March 1874: The Diocese of Sandhurst was established, along with the neighbouring Diocese of Ballarat. It was formed from four mission stations (Bendigo (Sandhurst as it was known then) Heathcote, Beechworth, and Wangaratta), which were originally under the care of the Diocese of Melbourne, which became an Archdiocese on the same day.
- [St Kilian's Church](#) was the pro-cathedral of the Diocese until Sacred Heart Cathedral was opened in 1901 and eventually completed in 1977.
- 2024: The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst is now home to forty parishes, 56 schools, six nursing homes and one hospital.
- [Bishop Shane Mackinlay](#) is the eighth Bishop of Sandhurst.  
Official title: Most Rev. Dr Shane Mackinlay.
- 24 March 2024: Mass on Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter) commences with an outdoor procession of Palms, commemorating Jesus Christ's welcome to Jerusalem.
- 26 March 2024: The annual [Chrism Mass](#) or Mass of the Holy Oils, where oils are blessed for use in sacraments throughout the Diocese over the coming year.