



DIOCESE of  
PARRAMATTA

# MEDIA RELEASE

31 July 2025

## **Reasons for Hope: 40 years of global voices in the Australian Catholic Church celebrated in new book**

***Inspired by Br Mark O'Connor's creation of the Helder Camara Lecture Series and his 40-year commitment to dialogue and mission in the Australian Church.***

A new book launched by renowned Australian journalist Geraldine Doogue AO offers a reflective look at the legacy of Brazilian Archbishop Dom Hélder Câmara (the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife from 1964 to 1985 during the military dictatorship in Brazil, who was declared a Servant of God in 2015), and those who have kept his vision alive in Australia.

Among them is Br Mark O'Connor FMS, a Marist Brother and Vicar for Communications in the Diocese of Parramatta, who has faithfully coordinated the Hélder Câmara Lecture Series for the past 40 years, beginning after Câmara's visit to Australia in May 1985. The series has fostered dialogue within the Catholic Church by bringing global voices of hope and encouragement into conversation with local Catholic communities. Br Mark also penned the book's preface.

Authored by historian Dr Julie Thorpe, *Reasons for Hope: Helder Camara, Global Catholicism and the Australian Church* traces the history and impact of the influential lecture series held at Newman College Parkville – administered by the Jesuits for the Archdiocese of Melbourne at The University of Melbourne – and the wider movement of listening and dialogue it has inspired. These lectures have grown and now feature in the Diocese of Parramatta.

Organised thematically, the book explores the challenges and hopes that have shaped the Church, with a centrefold tribute to its 100 influential theologians and leading Catholic voices such as Cardinal Robert McElroy (US), Cardinal Charles Bo SDB (Myanmar), Cardinal Luis Tagle SJ (Philippines), Monsignor Professor Tomáš Halík (Czechia), Undersecretary of the Secretariat of the Synod, Sr Nathalie Becquart XMCJ (France), Professor Maryanne Glendon from Harvard and former US Ambassador to the Holy See, Baroness Sheila Hollins, House of Lords (UK), and CNN's Vatican correspondent, Mr Christopher Lamb (Italy).

The book was launched in Melbourne on Wednesday, 30 July, during the latest Helder Camara lecture delivered by respected Latin American lay leader Mauricio López Oropeza, who also spoke at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall in Parramatta as part of the *Bishop Vincent Presents* lecture series.

Br Mark said in the book's preface: "In a world full of violence and hatred, the gospel witness of Dom Hélder Câmara of Recife, Brazil, stands as a beacon of light and hope."

***Reasons for Hope* is available through [Garratt Publishing](#). Read Br Mark's interview with the Diocese's [Catholic Outlook](#), as well as with [Eureka Street](#).**

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**For media enquiries or to arrange an interview, contact:**

Belinda Gadd, Communications Manager. **M:** 0456 290 969 **E:** [belinda.gadd@parracatholic.org](mailto:belinda.gadd@parracatholic.org)

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## **About the Diocese of Parramatta**

The Diocese of Parramatta is the Catholic Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains and is home to over 320,000 Catholics with 45 parishes and churches. The Diocese educates more than 43,000 students across its 80 schools, employs more than 5,500 people and cares for thousands of people in need through its social services arm, Catholic Care. Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv was appointed the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in 2016. He is Australia's first Asian-born Bishop, and the first Vietnamese-born Bishop to lead a Catholic Diocese outside of Vietnam. You can read more about [him here](#).