



THE PRESIDENT

MEDIA RELEASE

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## Pope Leo appoints ninth Bishop of Ballarat

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has welcomed the appointment of Fr Mark William Freeman as the ninth Bishop of Ballarat.

Pope Leo XIV announced the appointment in Rome on Wednesday night.

Fr Freeman, 66, currently serves as Parish Priest in Bellerive-Lindisfarne, in the Archdiocese of Hobart.

He will succeed Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, who has led the Diocese of Ballarat since late 2012.

Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, said the announcement would be greeted with joy and hope by the Catholic community in the Diocese of Ballarat.

“Fr Freeman has, since his priestly ordination in 1984, gained wide experience as a pastor in the Archdiocese of Hobart and has, in recent years, also served as the Chancellor of the Archdiocese,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

“This combination of pastoral and administrative leadership means that Fr Freeman is well equipped to take up the role of chief shepherd for the Catholic community soon to be entrusted to his care.

“His wide experience and many gifts, his deep faith and his pastoral sensitivity will also be greatly valued by his brother bishops as he joins them in their pastoral oversight of the Catholic Church in Australia.”

Archbishop of Hobart Anthony Ireland described Fr Freeman as “one of Tasmania’s finest”.

“He has served in every part of the archdiocese and in its most senior leadership roles, providing wise counsel to three archbishops ... I wish him every blessing and success in his new ministry.”

Fr Freeman will be ordained to the episcopacy and installed as the ninth Bishop of Ballarat in March. Further details will be announced shortly.