



Sisters of Saint Joseph
of the Sacred Heart

3 February 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

Mass for Handing on Leadership ***Much for which to be grateful***

On Sunday, 1 February 2026 at the Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel in North Sydney, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart gathered to celebrate a Mass for Handing on Leadership.

The new Congregational Leadership Team, consisting of Sister Josephine Dubiel as Congregational Leader with Sisters Brigette Sipa, Mary Ellen O'Donoghue, Catherine Mead, and Susan Connelly, will take forward the vision and directions of the Congregation for the next five years.

Completing their term of office were Sister Monica Cavanagh, who served 12 years as Congregational Leader, Sister Louise Reeves and Sister Clare Conaglen.

The Mass for Handing on Leadership attended by Sisters, family, friends, staff and supporters, offered a moment to pause in gratitude for the ministry of the outgoing Congregational Leadership Team. It was also an opportunity to ritualise the handing on of leadership within the context of the direction set by the 28th General Chapter with its call to embrace a "prophetic stance of Inclusion".

The Mass commenced with an Acknowledgement of Country by Cassandra Gibbs, Reconciliation Action Plan Officer for the Sisters of Saint Joseph, followed by a water blessing and sprinkling by Aboriginal women from the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation.

On behalf of all the Sisters of the Congregation, Sister Mary Comer, provided thanks to the outgoing and incoming Congregational Leadership Teams.

"We express our gratitude Sisters... who have served us in leadership over the last six years. We thank you for all you have given.

"As we begin another chapter in the Josephite journey, we are grateful to you Josephine, Mary Ellen, Brigette, Catherine and Susan who have accepted to take up the role of leadership and stewardship of the Congregation for the next five years.

"You are called to challenge us, to maintain our focus on mission and ministry, so we can be a yeast of hope in our society... today we launch you on this new leadership journey, assuring you of our support and prayer. In the words of Pope Francis in 2014, 'look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope'. We do so in the spirit of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods, trusting in our God who holds all creation in being."

Sister Monica welcomed the incoming Congregational Leadership Team.

"What rises in my heart, and in the heart of each of us, is the gift of gratitude," said Sister Monica Cavanagh. "In Mary MacKillop's words we can say "we have much for which to be grateful".

"Today, we as Josephites stand at a threshold in our story, as we ritualise both an ending and a welcoming of the new. We trust in the Spirit who is always shaping what comes next. I am grateful for every step of the journey and the many treasured memories.

“The heart of our Congregation has never rested in one person, or one team. It lives in our shared purpose, our shared faith and our willingness to keep walking together. As this leadership term closes and another begins, I trust deeply that the permeating Spirit who has guided us so faithfully, will continue to lead us forward with a heart for mission.”

Sister Josephine, as the new Congregational Leader, invited attendees to stand and commit to the living the Spirit of the 28th General Chapter.

“We look forward now to evolving the Chapter directive, of a prophetic stance of Inclusion during the next five years,” said Sister Josephine. “As we do that, we are inspired by Mary MacKillop’s promise that in St Joseph’s care I leave you.”

The 28th General Chapter Direction statement, *Let the Yeast Rise* (Luke 13:21), was created during the Chapter process in October 2025. The Chapter Members recognised that in the context of a world where truth and trust are diminished and separation and exclusion prevail, a renewed commitment to contemplative action enables them to bring about healing and hope wherever they find themselves.

A livestream of the Handing on Leadership Mass can be viewed here: [CLT Handing on Leadership Mass - 1 February 2026 on Vimeo](#)

Captions

Pic 1: New Congregational Leadership Team (l-r) Sr Mary Ellen O’Donoghue, Sr Brigette Sipa, Sr Josephine Dubiel, Sr Catherine Mead and Sr Susan Connelly



Pic 2: Sisters Josephine Dubiel and Monica Cavanagh



Pic 3: 28th Chapter candle on St Mary MacKillop's tomb



Media Contact

Louise Carson
Communications Manager
Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart
E: communications@sosj.org.au