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Diocese of Parramatta launches new theological formation program for lay leaders

The Diocese of Parramatta is partnering with [BBI-The Australian Institute of Theological Education](#) (BBI-TAITE) to subsidise the cost and provide parishioners with greater access to formal theological education, equipping more lay women and men to take an active role in the life and mission of the Church.

Applications are now open for a new nationally recognised Undergraduate Certificate in Theology, with the first cohort commencing in Semester 1, 2027.

The initiative responds directly to a commitment in the Diocese of Parramatta's Pastoral Plan to strengthen the formation of lay women and men, enabling them to respond more fully to their baptismal call and become active and co-responsible participants in the Church.

Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, said formation was essential to building a stronger and more vibrant Church.

"A key theme from our Diocesan Synod in 2023 was the ongoing and substantial formation for lay women and men that would allow them to more meaningfully respond to the call of their baptism and become more active and co-responsible participants in the life and mission of the Church," said Bishop Vincent.

"In response to this, our Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church has a priority of 'Formation', with one of the commitments being to 'sponsor equal numbers of women and men from the Diocese in studies of ecclesiology, theology, models for pastoral care, leadership and ministry.'"

"This partnership with BBI-TAITE is an important investment in the people of our Diocese and our Church. The competitive fee structure which is heavily subsidised by the Diocese and local parishes makes formal education more accessible to people who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to undertake formal theological studies.

"In turn, it will give parishioners the opportunity to deepen their theological understanding while developing the confidence and capacity to take on meaningful roles in local ministry, leadership and service," he said.

The two-year, part-time program comprises four units: Theology, Scripture, Ecclesiology and Spirituality, with each unit delivered over a semester in a face-to-face setting at the Bishop Bede Heather Centre in Blacktown. Courses are taught by BBI-TAITE academic staff, with students also receiving online support throughout their studies.

The Diocese will subsidise 50 per cent of each student's course fees, with parishes contributing 30 per cent and students contributing the remaining 20 per cent.

Professor Gerard Moore, Principal/CEO of BBI-TAITE said the partnership represented an exciting opportunity to make theological education more accessible to people actively involved in parish life.

"Theology is not simply something to be studied in a classroom or by specialists. It helps us understand our faith more deeply and gives us the language, knowledge and confidence to live that faith and share it with others," Gerard said.

"We are delighted to partner with the Diocese of Parramatta to offer this nationally recognised qualification in a way that is accessible, supported and connected to the life of local parishes. We look forward to welcoming the first cohort in 2027 and accompanying them on their formation journey."

Bishop Vincent said the benefits would extend beyond individual students.

“When we invest in the formation of our people, we are investing in the future of our parishes and our Diocese,” he said.

“This will equip people not only to deepen their own faith, but to share their gifts, accompany others and make synodality a truly constitutive dimension of our local Church where the seeds we have sown will bear fruit for generations to come.”

Applications for the Undergraduate Certificate in Theology are now open.

For more information and to apply: [Diocese of Parramatta – Study Catholic Theology](#)

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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](#).

About BBI-Taite

BBI-TAITE delivers postgraduate courses and non-award adult faith and professional development courses. The postgraduate courses are in theological studies, religious education, leadership and theology, and canon law. The Institute designs non-award programs to build Christian faith, spirituality, and leadership. Through these offerings we seek to fulfill the original charter's requirement to “undertake the education of persons in Christian spirituality and adult education and to give any person who is desirous of undertaking or continuing their education in Christian spirituality and adult education the opportunity to do so.” In August 2023 we became a Member Institution of the Sydney College of Divinity.