



DIOCESE OF BROOME

Message from Bishop Michael Morrissey

My Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

What happened over this past week in the media shocked and appalled me for many reasons.

First, I felt quite paralysed by what was being revealed on national media about the canonical investigation for Integrity in Ministry and Vos Estis Lux Mundi concerning Bishop Saunders.

Second, my distress for those people in our Professional Standards Office and Investigators who carefully, respectfully and kindly worked with many people who came forward to speak with them.

Third and most importantly for those people who trusted to share the story of their experience to us. Everyone in the local church and Kimberley has been affected by what happened this week. All of us can have so many feelings about what has happened. Your thoughts and reactions are more than understandable., You may feel angry and deeply upset, confused about what happened this week even experiencing a sense of betrayal of the trust you gave us.

I have not spoken to the media deliberately, as I wanted to you to hear my brief thoughts first from the priests here on the Sunday masses. All people including the former Bishop are entitled to have their confidences respected, especially during an investigation, and not have that betrayed until all the appropriate processes are completed.

The only words and this seems quite inadequate, is I am deeply sorry about what happened this week and its awful impact upon you. It remains a complete mystery to me and to those who have been supporting you through this journey and process how Channel 7 gained access to the report.

I will be in Broome this coming week and I am very happy to meet with anyone who wishes to speak to me. For those outside of Broome I am also very willing to listen to you. With Mark Copland and others, I am looking at ways we help and assist people who need support at this time. I would hope that things will be in place early this coming week. I acknowledge that the lines of communication between Church authorities and the faithful has not been adequate. This has been partly due to not wishing to compromise legal processes within and outside the Church. It was always my hope that you would hear from me first, rather than through a media filter. We will work harder at ensuring this occurs.

I was in Sydney attending my Bishop's Commission for Evangelisation when the story was aired last Monday night. I thought to myself what words can I offer to you? When I was appointed Bishop in 2017, Pope Francis reminded the new bishops, "Remember God was in your Diocese when you came, and God will still be there when you leave".

I keep those words in my heart and this is what I have experienced during my two years of being Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese of Broome in all my encounters with you. God is still very present in each of you today and will be present as you care and look out for each other in these difficult times. I am very much aware that there is a lot of sadness at the moment in many places in the Kimberley because of recent passings of people in your communities. As I was sitting beside the tomb of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, I asked that her wisdom, guidance and gentle presence in eternal life be with each of you today.

Thank you for coming to Mass this morning, and you are very much in my prayers and thoughts as are your families and friends.

Bishop Michael Morrissey