



## MILDURA SACRED HEART PRIESTS DEPART TO SPREAD THE WORD

Mildura's Sacred Heart Parish farewelled two beloved priests on Monday, June 1 as both departed Sunraysia for new assignments. Fr James Kerr, who arrived from Ballarat in 2017, heads to Swan Hill and Fr Michael McKinnon, who has been parish priest for almost ten years, will take on interim work throughout the Ballarat diocese until he can travel to Peru for missionary work.

Fr James and Fr Mick cited Mildura's multicultural community and its warm weather as one of the attractions of the parish. "I find the community here is very rounded," Fr Mick said. "There's a lot of



common sense here. But, it's also very multicultural and that's one of the great attractions." Sharing meaningful moments with Mildura families, such as weddings, christenings and funerals, were also highlights for Fr James, and Fr Mick said construction of the Monaghan Centre and his work with schools was very fulfilling.

Although both priests agreed leaving Mildura would be difficult, they said they were excited about the adventure ahead. "I'm looking forward to getting to know a new community," Fr James said. "I expect to be there for a long time, so it's very exciting to be making plans for the future."

Fr Mick said he was also incredibly thankful for the community's support throughout his time at the parish. "If I didn't have the opportunity to go back to Peru, I wouldn't be rushing out of Mildura now," he said. "But if I don't take it now, it might not be there again and I think, after nine or ten years, people can do with a change anyway – it's good for someone new to come through."

"Last time I was working on the edge of Lima, in shanty towns and things. I enjoy being immersed in another culture and, because there's so much less state support and government support for rural communities, the church tends to fill that gap for those communities," Fr Mick said. "So, a lot of the work I was involved in last time included assisting children with malnutrition and establishing women's groups to support women, to bring income into their homes. Those sorts of projects I really enjoy."

*Article courtesy of the Sunraysia Daily, text by Teagan Bell*