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Remembering Bishop Mulkearns

Dear Friends,

This coming Monday especially, members of our Catholic community will be remembering Bishop Ronald Mulkearns. There will be a gathering for his funeral in Ballarat. There will also be gatherings for prayer and reflection in other parts of the Ballarat diocese. In all these gatherings, I expect there will be very mixed emotions.

We will be painfully aware of the criticisms of Bishop Mulkearns for his failings. At the same time, we will recall the good he did. His friends will be sad that the good has generally been forgotten. As one of those friends wrote in the Ballarat Courier on Friday: "He is not famous for the many things he did well; only for the one thing he did badly".

His family remembers a devoted brother and uncle. His friends recall a shy man who liked to share quiet times. Over the past few days a number of people have spoken to me of his kindness. And this was not only people from the diocese of Ballarat. I received an email from a priest in Peru who recalled with gratitude the kindness Bishop Mulkearns showed when he visited a local parish there in the 1980s. He wrote: "I only ever met Bishop Ronald once, and that was in the 80s when he came to Lima and visited our parish. Many years back, but I never forgot his kindness to us."

Some have recalled the contribution Bishop Mulkearns made to fostering social welfare services in our region, services that grew into what is now Centacare. Others have remembered how he promoted opportunities for people to study at university level.

I thank those who have contacted me over this past week with their reflections following the death of Bishop Mulkearns. There are reasons for gratitude as we recall the good that he did.

May he rest in peace.

God bless you all.

Yours in Christ,

Paul Bird CSsR

Bishop of Ballarat