

ORDINATION AS BISHOP
MOST REV. SHANE MACKINLAY

16 OCTOBER 2019

As I take up this ministry of bishop, I am honoured to be welcomed to the ancestral lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung (Jar-Jar-Wur-Ung) people. I pay respect to the Elders of all the Lands of the Sandhurst Diocese – the Yorta Yorta Nation, the Minjambuta, the Baraparapa, the Dhuduroa, and the Taungurang, and I extend my recognition to their descendants who are present.

I also acknowledge those who have come to this region in the generations since European settlement, and the legacy they have passed on in building up the gracious and beautiful city of Bendigo, the other population centres of the diocese, and the fertile and carefully tended farmland, orchards and vineyards of the region. I particularly acknowledge and give thanks for the heritage of faith which has been nourished through the generations in this region, and which is so dramatically evident in this extraordinary cathedral.

I come here from a diocese not so far away, which has many parallels with Sandhurst in its history, landscape and communities – and today it feels like it has similarities even in its weather, which is not what I anticipated! But at the same time as noting the parallels, I recognise that much about the diocese of Sandhurst is unfamiliar to me, and I look forward to hearing the stories of this place as I come to share in the life of the people here.

I'm delighted that the mostly friendly rivalry between Bendigo and Ballarat has not stood in the way of a wonderful contingent of people from Ballarat and from other parts of my life being here.

My family and friends are very well represented today and have made great efforts to be here, including my brother, who has travelled from Germany. I thank my parents particularly, who first introduced me to God's love, and who have modelled that in their relationship with one another and in their love and care for us three children, and now for their five grandchildren.

I thank the people, priests and bishops of the Ballarat diocese, where I have always felt a tremendous sense of belonging, and where I have been so well nurtured. I thank the people of the Ballarat East parish, in which I grew up, and the various parishes in which I have served, and especially the people of the Bungaree and Gordon parishes. I have found my ministry amongst you deeply satisfying. Over the last fifteen years, I have been blessed to live and grow as a disciple as part of your faith communities. I have valued your support and care for me very much, and I am sad to leave my home with you. I will miss my life and ministry in your midst.

I thank the staff and students of Catholic Theological College, which might be a bit quiet today, as a very large number are here with us. I have loved my ministry of teaching and leadership amongst you at CTC and the University of Divinity. I have learned a great deal myself in the process, and I have been enriched by your wisdom, your insights, your faith and your friendship.

An enormous number of people have contributed to this wonderful ceremony today, in planning, in music (as performers and even as composer), in liturgical preparation, in hospitality, logistics, technology, and so on. I am very grateful to you all. I won't begin to name people, as we would be here all afternoon!

Thanks particularly to Archbishop Peter Comensoli, who ordained me and led us in the first part of our liturgy, to the Apostolic Nuncio, and to all the Australian bishops, so many of whom have gone to great lengths to be with us today. I am very grateful for your support, and for the personal welcome and encouragement that you have taken such care to show me since my appointment was announced.

As we saw earlier, there are laypeople, religious and priests from all parts of the diocese here, who together represent all the richness of the ways in which our faith is lived out in this region. There are also representatives of other denominations and other faiths, and of the civic community, which I appreciate very much. I have been overwhelmed by the welcome that I have received in the last few months and I look forward to coming to know you more personally as I visit the various parts of the diocese in the months and years ahead.

I particularly thank Bishop Les, who has been outstanding in the consideration and generosity of his welcome to me. One of the things I have come to learn about him over this time is that he is something of a walking encyclopaedia of the diocese, which has indicated a great deal to me not only about his particular skills, but also about the faithfulness, dedication and commitment with which he has served as bishop. He is a fine model to be following.

I am very aware that I come into a story that began long before I arrived, and I'm honoured that the various signs of my ministry with which I have been invested today belong to that history. I am also aware that the story of this diocese into which I have been called is one that will go on long after my time here as bishop. Ultimately, it is God's story, in which each of us is privileged to play a part. We are called on the day of our baptism to live as disciples of Jesus, as part of God's holy people, as a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. We are entrusted with building up the reign of God that Jesus inaugurated, sharing with the world the fullness of life that he offers, through our service of others, and in our relationship with God and with one another.

These are challenging times in which to do this, with many people feeling deeply hurt and disillusioned by the Church. I take those challenges very seriously; responding to them must be integral to whatever we do. At the same time, I recognise that this is certainly not the only time in which living as a disciple of Jesus has been challenging! We can only be faithful to this calling by placing our trust in God, sharing our gifts generously with those around us, and valuing and celebrating the riches that are brought by each member of our community. I look forward to continuing that mission with you over the years ahead in this new ministry to which I have been called today.