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8 October 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Earlier in the year, I wrote to you about my plans to renew the sanctuary of our Cathedral of St. Joseph, the cathedral church of our diocese. I outlined that for both liturgical and practical reasons the sanctuary needs considerable renovation.

The present sanctuary was built in 1982, when the centenary year of the diocese was celebrated and the cathedral itself was finally completed. The sanctuary constructed then was intended as a temporary structure and that in good time, a permanent sanctuary would be created and built to replace it.

The experience of celebrating the church's liturgy in the cathedral since it was opened in 1894 and the development of the liturgy and its principles since then, now all inform our emerging vision for a renewed and permanent sanctuary. In creating this vision, consideration will be given to some practical issues such as the number of steps in the present sanctuary which can be problematic, the aged floorcoverings, appropriate lighting, along with the placing of the liturgical furniture from which the leadership of the liturgical assembly flows. Such considerations will only serve to enhance the beauty of the liturgy.

Seen in the light of the cathedral's many phases of development, this project then honours the generations of the faithful who have made generous contributions to the initial construction and later restorations of the beautiful gothic cathedral that is St. Joseph's. To put the sanctuary renewal project into effect, I gathered a group of advisors, and following their advice, I have now engaged an architectural firm which is currently undertaking the task of designing a draft of a renewed sanctuary for further consultation.

Over the next few weeks, I would like to place the Sanctuary Renewal Project before you in a more direct way, culminating in our annual St Joseph's Cathedral Appeal on 9 November. I have asked the priests of the diocese to share with you, either in homilies or commentary, some of the important considerations for the appeal, and how the funds raised will go directly to the sanctuary renewal project.

Notably, Sunday 9 November, the Sunday set aside for the St Joseph's Cathedral Appeal, is also the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, the cathedral church of the pope, the Bishop of Rome and considered to be "the mother church" of all churches in the world. Also, this feast day is not long after the Jubilee of the Opening of St Joseph's Cathedral (15 October 1894). So, 9 November will be an appropriate day on which to appeal for your help for our Sanctuary Renewal Project.

I commend this appeal to you for all that it will achieve for our diocese for generations to come. I hope the information that will be provided regarding our cathedral over the next few weeks will offer us much inspiration and I sincerely thank you for whatever support you can provide through the appeal.

Please be assured of my prayers for all in our diocesan community.

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton