



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF ROCKHAMPTON



St Joseph's Cathedral Appeal
Week 2 – 26 October
The Place of the Sanctuary in Christian Worship

The Old Testament has many references to the importance of a sanctuary in a place of worship. The Psalmist reminds us that it is a place from which God's grace flows to us.

*"O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory." — Psalm 63*

References such as this show how the biblical tradition recognises the importance of the sanctuary in places of worship and prayer in which God's relationship with his people is nurtured. From the time of King Solomon and the temple in Jerusalem, the people have believed that the presence of the Living God is celebrated and adored in the sanctuaries constructed by God's people. The sanctuary has the role of enabling the meeting between God and God's people. And by meeting God, especially in times of worship, we are drawn into God's life and so share God's life with the world.

Following the Old Testament tradition, Christians also seek the presence of God in the sanctuary. As Catholics we draw on the *General Introduction to the Roman Missal* (no. 295) that tells us, "our Sanctuary is the place where the Eucharist is celebrated: where the Altar stands, where the Word of God is proclaimed and where the Priest, Deacon, and other ministers exercise their functions. It is the place that allows the Eucharist to be easily celebrated and seen."

Placing these thoughts in the context of the sanctuary of Saint Joseph's Cathedral and considering Bishop Michael's letter to us from last week regarding the upcoming St Joseph's Cathedral Appeal to support the renewal of the sanctuary of the cathedral, we remember how this space is of central importance for the people of the Diocese of Rockhampton.

When we gather in our cathedral, as God's people we process to the sanctuary and are greeted by our bishop from his chair, also known as the *cathedra*. Then we are nourished by God's Word from the ambo or lectern. Next, we are nourished again from the altar by Christ in the sacrament of His body and blood. Finally, once more from his chair, we are sent forth by the bishop, as the people of God, to share the Good News through our words and actions.

Last week in his letter, Bishop Michael highlighted that for various reasons, both liturgical and practical, the sanctuary of our Cathedral needs considerable renovation. He is seeking our support in making this renewal possible for the present and future generation of believers who will gather in the cathedral for prayer and worship. So, gathered in unity around the bishop in the church's liturgy, the people of God may continue to encounter the presence of God, and be nurtured in their part of the Church's mission, which has a sacred focus in the space of the cathedral sanctuary.