

Good evening.

My name is Cathy O'Brien, Chair of the Pastoral Council, and I warmly welcome you, parishioners and guests, to the inaugural Mass of our newly formed parish of Our Lady of the Valley, Diamond Valley.

Our new parish began its life on 24 May 2026, but the journey towards this union started many years ago. It was in 2012 that the partnership began between Sacred Heart Parish, including St Peter's Hurstbridge, and St Thomas the Apostle Parish, and in 2017 St Mary's joined the partnership.

Over these fourteen years, we have moved into closer communion, increasingly sharing many aspects of life as a whole faith community, respecting and valuing our different histories and ways of being, and appreciating and cherishing the experience, wisdom and gifts of those across the partnership. In recent years we have considered and discerned our future as church in the Diamond Valley, and after an inclusive process, we decided that together, as one parish, we will be a stronger community of faith, centred on Christ and guided by the faith and grace of Our Lady. Our Mass this evening marks and celebrates the birth of our new parish and we look forward with love, hope and in fellowship.

We are delighted that our regional bishop, Thinh Nyuyen, is with us this evening, concelebrating with our Parish Priest, Father Steven Rigo, and our Assistant Priest, Father Libeesh Kuriakose. We welcome other members of the clergy, in particular Father Michael McEntee, the first parish priest of the partnership, Fathers Ananda Maddineni and Zaher Al Mhanna, former assistant priests of the partnership, and Father Kevin McIntosh, the first parish priest of St Thomas.

We also welcome current and past principals and staff members of our primary schools, the principal of Loyola College, former pastoral associates and other committed people who have worked in various ways in our parishes. We welcome the Mayor of Banyule, Alison Champion and the State Member of Parliament for Bundoora, Colin Brooks.

Finally, I welcome all our loyal parishioners, including our school children and families, choir and musicians, and every person whose faith and dedication has contributed to this Mass.

Now let us stand and greet one another in joy and friendship as the clergy and others process to the altar.