



A Pastoral Letter for the National Vocations Awareness Week 2026

"The Harvest is Abundant" *Pray the Lord of the Harvest*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This week, the Catholic Church in Australia celebrates **National Vocations Awareness Week**, from **2–9 August**, culminating in the feast of **St Mary of the Cross MacKillop**, our nation's first saint. It is a time when we are invited to reflect on God's call in our lives, to pray for vocations, and to encourage one another—especially our young people—to listen generously to the voice of the Lord.

While this week shines a particular light on priestly and religious vocations, it also reminds us that every Christian has a vocation. Through Baptism, each of us is called to holiness and to participate in Christ's mission according to the unique path God has prepared for us. Yet, among all the invitations the Church offers during this week, there is one that comes not from a programme or initiative, but from the lips of Jesus Himself.

In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, we read:

"Jesus went about all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with compassion for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest.'"
(Matthew 9:35–38)

It is striking that before Jesus sends the Apostles into mission, He first commands His disciples to pray.

Most Rev. Rene Ramirez RCJ
Bishop of Sandhurst
PO Box 201 Bendigo VIC 3552
Phone : (03) 5441 2544 Email : bishop@cdos.org.au



The first response to the needs of the Church is not anxiety, planning or activity.

It is prayer.

These words have shaped my own vocation since I entered the Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus. Our Congregation was founded by **Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia**, who recognised in this passage what he called the heart of the Gospel. He believed that Christ's command to "*ask the Lord of the harvest*" is not an optional devotion but a permanent mission entrusted to the whole Church.

Saint Hannibal taught that praying for vocations is much more than asking God for more priests and religious—important though that is. It is a prayer that the Lord will raise up holy labourers of every kind: faithful husbands and wives, loving parents, generous priests and deacons, consecrated women and men, dedicated teachers, catechists, missionaries, pastoral workers, and committed lay disciples. It is also a prayer that those whom God is calling will have the courage to respond with generous hearts.

This beautiful spirituality, known simply as the **Rogate**—a Latin word meaning "*Pray*"—belongs not only to the Rogationists. It belongs to the whole Church because it comes directly from the Gospel itself.

As I begin my ministry among you as Bishop of Sandhurst, I would like to offer this charism as a gift to our Diocese.

Our Diocese has been richly blessed throughout its history with devoted priests, religious sisters and brothers, deacons, parish leaders, teachers, volunteers and families who have faithfully handed on the faith for generations. We thank God for every one of them.

Yet the words of Jesus remain just as relevant today as when they were first spoken.

The harvest is still abundant.

Many people long to know Christ more deeply. Families seek hope and encouragement. Young people search for meaning and purpose. Our parishes continue to proclaim the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments and serve those in need. The mission entrusted to us is as great as ever.

And so the Lord continues to say to His Church:
"Ask the Lord of the harvest."

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As your Bishop, I therefore invite every parish, school, family, religious community and ministry across the Diocese of Sandhurst to make this prayer a regular part of our spiritual life.

I ask parents to pray with their children for vocations.

I ask our Catholic schools to encourage young people to discover the joy of asking not simply, *"What do I want to do with my life?"* but rather, *"Lord, what are You calling me to become?"*

I ask those who spend time before the Blessed Sacrament to remember this intention each time they pray.

I ask our parish prayer groups and ministries to include vocations among their regular intentions.

Above all, I invite every member of our diocesan family to adopt a simple prayer that has been treasured for generations within the Rogationist family:

Send, O Lord, holy Apostles into Your Church!

It is a prayer that anyone can pray.
A child can pray it.
A grandparent can pray it.
A family can pray it around the dinner table.
A teacher can pray it with students.
A parish can proclaim it together at Mass.
Its simplicity is its strength.

May these words become familiar throughout our Diocese. May they rise each day from our churches, schools, homes, hospitals, farms and workplaces. May they become part of the spiritual heartbeat of the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Yet whenever we pray for holy labourers, we must also remember that the Lord often begins by looking into our own hearts.

Every time we pray for vocations, we also pray that we may become labourers that Christ desires us to be.



Some are called to priesthood.
Some to consecrated life.
Some to marriage and family life.
Some to generous service within the Church and the wider community.
Every vocation, faithfully lived, becomes a sign of God's love for the world.

This National Vocations Awareness Week, let us renew our confidence that the Lord continues to call. He has not ceased speaking. He still raises up men and women of zeal and mercy to continue His mission. Our task is to pray with faith, to listen with open hearts, and to respond with generosity.

As your Bishop, I invite every parish in our Diocese, not only during this week but throughout the coming year, to conclude the Prayer of the Faithful each Sunday with this simple invocation:

Leader: Let us pray for Vocations: *The harvest is abundant, but the labourers are few.*

All: **Send, O Lord, holy Apostles into Your Church!**

May this prayer become part of our diocesan identity. May it continually remind us that vocations are born from the compassionate Heart of Jesus and sustained by the faithful prayers of His people.

Entrusting this intention to the intercession of **St Mary of the Cross MacKillop**, who taught us never to see a need without doing something about it; to **Saint Hannibal Mary Di Francia**, Apostle of Prayer for Vocations; and to **Mary, Mother of Vocations**, who answered God's call with her wholehearted "Yes", I pray that the Lord will richly bless our Diocese with holy priests, faithful religious, joyful families, generous lay leaders and courageous young people who will answer His call with trust and love.

Together, let us never grow weary of praying:

St. John Marie Vianney, Pray for us!
Send, O Lord, holy Apostles into Your Church!

With every blessing in Christ,

✠ **Most Rev René Ramirez RCJ**

Most Rev. Rene Ramirez RCJ
Bishop of Sandhurst
PO Box 201 Bendigo VIC 3552
Phone : (03) 5441 2544 Email : bishop@cdos.org.au