



Australian Province of the Society of Jesus

Extract from a Letter from Fr Stephen Curtin S.J., Provincial to Fr Chris Jenkins

2 September 2013

Pastoral Ministries Planning

With the support of committed and gifted lay companions who share leadership in our ministries the Society of Jesus continues to do a great deal of good in the service of the Church in Australia. However in line with trends in the Australian Church generally, the number of priests in the Australian Province has been declining steadily for some years. We now have difficulty finding Jesuits with the health, energy and aptitude needed for demanding leadership and management roles. This presents a particular difficulty for the Pastoral Ministries of the Province. This is not only because sacramental ministry requires ordination but also because canon law requires that administrative authority in parishes be vested in clerics.

To prepare for the continuing decline in the number of Jesuits available for pastoral ministry in the coming years I have asked the Ministries Commission to develop a plan for the pastoral ministries. The plan will include recommendations concerning alternative arrangements available to our pastoral ministries when we are not able to replace a Jesuit pastor with another Jesuit. The Provincial Delegate for Pastoral Ministry, Fr Des Dwyer S.J. will lead this planning process with the aid of the Delegate for Special Projects, Ms Jennie Hickey. The Ministries Commission will deliver its final report and recommendations to me by the end of February 2014.

The Pastoral Ministries planning process will consider all parishes and migrant chaplaincies currently in the care of the Jesuits. The pastoral plan will consider the number and age of Jesuit priests who may be available for pastoral ministry and their particular gifts and limitations. The pastoral plan will be based on a comprehensive knowledge of the uniqueness of each pastoral ministry. A number of stages will be involved in the acquisition of this information beginning with a request for some written information about your parish profile. (see attached)

Over the coming months Jennie Hickey or another representative of the Ministries Commission will be visiting parishes to meet with pastors, parish staff and representatives of parishioners to help develop a more comprehensive understanding of each parish and identify strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and threats particular to each parish.