



**Sacred Heart Parish, Moruya**  
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## Dear Parishioners

**Greetings to you all.** A parish is a large Christian family where we gather to pray, to worship, to listen to God's word, share in the communion, receive various sacraments and thus build up a caring community of believers who would serve one another. Think of the awesome responsibility we share as people of God and as members of a parish. We share in the joys, sorrows and struggles of one another building up the church community, the body of Christ. As my tenure of leadership here is coming to an end in July 2025, it is good to look back and evaluate every aspect of our parish life for the last five and a half years to know our weaknesses and strength to set goals for the future; for this reason, this circular comes into your hands.

**Let's take a look back:** I was appointed admin of the parish on 10 December 2019 where there was no resident priest for three months. Consequently, the parish, liturgy, garden, presbytery and office was in chaos. Beginning from 31 December 2019 for more than a month the parish area and the long the South Coast suffered severely due to unprecedented bush fires which affected adversely a number of our parishioners with loss of homes and property as well as the psychological trauma of seeing bushfires around their fences for weeks. Soon came a rather severe flood around Moruya followed by the covid lock down and uncertainties that prevailed for a long time.

**As a parish community,** we stuck together and faced all these ordeals rising up to the challenge of caring for one another, providing comfort, food, transportation and visits to homebound, sick and covid affected helpless members. All these initiatives were arranged in the parish by its 'Caring Groups'. I mentioned this background to bring to mind a clear picture of the time I started as admin of the parish. It took a little while for every one to return to normal. As years went by, many of our parishioners survived well from these calamities but I think some were traumatised to the extent of showing signs of health problems.

**A praying community:** We have been trying to keep the parish a welcoming community, with warm, vibrant and prayerfully centred on the Eucharist. Our Sunday attendances have improved much although not very greatly. We constantly strive to grow as a praying community through meaningful Sunday liturgies and daily masses with due emphasis on feast days and solemnities which includes devotion like daily rosaries, novena to St Joseph, stations of the cross, divine mercy prayers, weekly Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart, holy hour, adoration and benediction, Saturday sodality group devotions to our Lady and monthly first Saturday morning confession, adoration with healing Mass and weekly confessions before Vigil Mass, all show that we are genuinely interested in spiritual growth.

**Our ministry to the sick and aged** by extraordinary ministers of Communion, the Ministry of the Caring Group, and the hospitality group are all rendering valuable and dedicated service and are much appreciated. Integrating into the mainstream Liturgy, like the Sacred Heart Parish feast day, Feast of Mary MacKillop, Australia Day, Anzac Day, Social Justice and Migrant day, Good Shepherd Sunday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, St Mary's Grandparents Day are all our ways of promoting spirituality in real life, patriotism, and the love for humanity; making Liturgy and life well integrated and meaningful.

**Committees:** The vision and mission of the parish is well addressed and supported by a dedicated team of the Parish Pastoral Committee, Finance Committee and Liturgy Committee including both school Principals who contribute vital support to the priest in the administration. We are proud that we have a dedicated team of choir members and a generous hospitality group.

**Events Spiritual:** Our advent and Lenten programs, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter celebrations, Sacred Heart Feast day all were well attended and spirituality uplifting.

From 2022 our parish has become the centre for monthly Mass gatherings for the recently growing Syro-Malabar Indian community in this area including Batemans Bay, Moruya and Narooma. Most of them are directly members of the Moruya parish and St Mary's school gradually getting integrated into the parish and school life.

**Events Social:** Parish Christmas Party in the garden, Paschal Meal at the Club, Birthday parties, Christmas lights, Spring Sale, Car boot sale in Moruya carpark and the Christmas Market at Bodalla church grounds, were organised for fundraising as well as encouraging community activities.

**Mass outstations:** At the Pines, Tuross Head 8am Mass is said every Sunday. At every second Thursdays and fourth Sunday afternoon Masses are celebrated at Bodalla church. Monthly Mass for residents is said at IRT Moruya and Banksia Village, Broulee along with confession and anointing of the sick. I attended to sick calls at the homes and Moruya Hospital as required and made regular visits to patients and homebound.

**Schools:** It was my joy to be an integral part of St Mary's school and Carroll College working closely with Principals, staff, parents and children for all their pastoral, spiritual and sacramental needs. It was rewarding to engage in a teamwork of priests, Principals and staff keen on imparting faith formation, catechism and sacraments to children. Whole school Mass, weekly class mass, confessions once a term and my classroom visit, preparing children for the sacrament of penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation were all part of the faith formation for children. Recently we have seen teachers and parents taking more interest in the life and activities of parish and school.

**Jobs completed:** Our church building in an around, our carpark, church grounds, Memorial Rose Garden and the presbytery and the BBQ area look elegant, dignified and well maintained. It goes without saying that the atmosphere and ambience of our church grounds, garden and carpark are on top as never before. The ornamental conifer trees, myrtle plants, ever-blooming roses, lush green lawn, well maintained garden beds, and the concreted BBQ/Morning tea area are all adding to the beauty of our old but elegant church buildings of which we are very proud.

In and around the church we were able to carry out a number of maintenance and improvement works in and around the church during my five year's tenure here. It is to be noted that the most important amongst them is the **installation of the two large television screens** and small screen for enhancing our Liturgies with visuals; be it for Sunday Mass, sacraments, funerals and other information or education purposes. **Fixing 12 LED lights for the roof, extra altar lights, permanent Ambo lights for readers, liturgical colour lights around the crucifix in the Sanctuary;** acquiring a **new organ/piano**, repairing the electronic device of the **Church bell** are all done five years ago and are now in full use. The **church heating system** was repaired and is in good working condition although we use it only very minimally due to its high running cost. The **security camera monitoring system** was repaired and is working well, which is important for our security as we keep the church open all day.

**In the foyer of the church,** we were able to install **new notice boards** along its three walls to standardise sticking notices. Installed **new Tap & Go machine, sanitiser and Holy Water dispensers**, installed a **new tower shaped donation collection box**, a recent addition of a life saving **defibrillator** as well as **piety religious items stall** was introduced in the foyer. All these greatly contribute to the enhancement of the functioning of the community. Security

lights around the church including **Victorian lamp posts** in front of the church and the restoration of **power connection to the Grotto** were done four years ago and they are keenly worked out utility and security measures.

**In the carpark:** the carpark was quite bare until five years ago. **Conifer and myrtle plants** were carefully planted along the wall and **installed bollards** to demark the parking curb area and to protect the plants.

**Grotto:** a lot of training the creeper plants were carried out to get the shape of the plants on the top of the grotto and regular clean ups done to maintain the inside of the grotto as well.

**Underground power cable connection:** Power connection from Queen Street to our main switchboard was in danger and the work pending when I took charge in 2020. The first major thing I did was to implement cabling power connection underground through the garden to the main switchboard avoiding damage hazard from palm trees.

**Rose garden:** In 2020, when I saw the roses they were dry and dying with weeks growing above the rose plants. After the winter, I replaced nearly 26 plants in two years and looked after them. Now there are about 78 plants in the rose garden with nearly 40 varieties of colours, shapes and fragrances. The plants in and around the BBQ/morning tea area, plants alongside the western side of the presbytery and plants in front of the presbytery, under the palm tree and alongside of the carpark and driveway were all planted at the time of covid lock-down and nurtured there after to bring them up to the present grandeur.

**Palm garden BBQ and morning tea area:** the idea of the palm garden morning tea area was conceived in my mind and drew up a plan which was executed gradually in different stages in about four years with the final concreting of the floor, to reach the present style. The contemporary style of this venue under the shady palms and synthetic shade sails, with the beautiful garden benches purchased from Bundaberg, Qld makes it special, rarely seen anywhere on the South Coast. I gratefully acknowledge the late Joe O'Connor for his tremendous input in the realization of this project. The total cost of this project may amount to \$54,000 or more. Many parishioners contributed to its cost, stage by stage, although the bulk of its cost was generously donated to two of our parishioners. This facility could accommodate twenty seated people gathering for parties, study, prayer and reflection, day or night if weather is good enough. We have already used this venue to all Sunday morning teas, parish feast day BBQ, gathering for Parish Christmas parties, Confirmation, First Holy Communion, First Reconciliation party, etc to mention some of them.

**Maintenance in the Presbytery:** During the last five years, furniture in the guest rooms were added and other electrical works were done in the Presbytery. The office, one of the guest rooms and the top front veranda floor were painted recently. Repair work on the roof of the back verandah of the presbytery was carried out and repainted. I personally repainted eleven doors and 3 windows of both corridors inside the presbytery and as well as the whole staircase. I have created a small backyard for the presbytery where a lot of vegies and greens are grown and the drive way in front of the presbytery was curbed and concreted.

**Office:** As early as 2020, we acquired a multi-coloured photocopier and printer in the office. Vickie Moore was appointed Secretary four years ago and has made a tremendous contribution to our Parish. Our cleaner and housekeeper, Sue Fawcett has worked now for 5 years for us. She does 5 hours work weekly in the church and presbytery. Our office is up to date with everything pertaining to office matters including accounts, book-keeping documentation and all government and legal matters thanks to the hard work of our Secretary.

**School Security Fencing:** In order to ensure security of our school children and proper spacing of the playground from the presbytery, the Church and the Bell Tower, a new fencing demarcation was proposed by me. The school agreed and the fence was erected by the Catholic Education Office during the first school term in 2024.

**Bodalla Church:** Much attention was given periodically to keep Bodalla Church and the grounds maintained which was sponsored by the 'Mort' Family. Monthly Sunday Mass on the fourth week and weekday Mass on the second week were celebrated regularly. Christmas Market 2024 was organised in the church grounds, was one its kind and was a great success.

**Parish Bulletin:** The Parish office produces a weekly bulletin for Sunday Liturgy aid with news and information since 2020. This medium of communication is in A3 paper size, multi colour and formal. It contains Sunday Word of God, explanations of the scripture; practical liturgy reviews with proper illustrations. It also contains activities of our parish, views, and Archdiocesan news that makes it a popular Parish bulletin top quality and much appreciated by parishioners and visitors.

**Parish Pastoral Returns:** we regret the death of a few sick and elderly parishioners. In the past five years **59 funerals** were conducted in our church. We pray for their eternal rest. A number of sacraments were administered also: **51 Baptisms, 97 Confirmations, nearly the same number of confessions and First Holy Communions, and 4 Weddings.** Congratulations to all of them.

**Areas of improvement:** Yet we cannot be lost in complacency. We need to grow in many areas as one parish – to know its members individually and have more interaction with them, a gradual shift from individualistic spirituality to communitarian where we learn to accept the growing diversity of the Parish and accommodate the young and the elderly, growing as a large parish family. We hope to improve day by day in liturgy with more readers and altar servers, a children's choir and **an official choir group for Sunday liturgy.** We look ahead to receive the service of at least a few more volunteers as acolytes, catechists, gardeners etc.

**Thanks:** I take this opportunity to thank all of you personally for your continued support and generosity to our parish contributing to its life, growth and vitality. The Parish is thriving because of your cheerful willingness to share your precious time, talents and generosity, together with your prayers in sharing the burden and responsibility of running our Parish. I thank both our school Principals and staff for their continued support and their effort in linking parents and children to the parish life.

Particularly, may I thank, on behalf of the rest of the community, the members of the Finance Committee, the PPC, organist, choir members, musicians, wardens, Readers, Counters, Offertory, Altar Servers, church cleaners, linen washers, gardeners, sacristans, hospitality, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, animators of children's liturgy, sacramental program coordinators, catechists and everyone who, with a sense of pride, volunteer in the house of the Lord joyfully. Sincere thanks to all of you for your contributions towards the first and second collections, planned weekly giving, and special appeals towards charitable works - Caritas Australia, Holy Land, Mission Appeal, Holy Fathers Appeal etc. Thanks to all who donated money and articles to the church by way of bequeaths, donations or participation in the raffles and fundraising events. I am aware that as days go by, the running cost of the Parish, the church, the presbytery and the schools are escalating. We go ahead as one Parish trusting God that He will provide through the sacrifice and generosity of its faithful members.

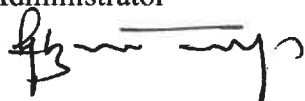
**Thank you for the love and concern you showed to me personally. I am glad I could take the Parish to a new realm in five years before moving on to another.**

**May our Parish patron – the Sacred Heart of Jesus, guard and protect us and keep us safe, healthy and happy.**

Yours lovingly in Christ Jesus

Fr George Azhakath

Administrator

 May 2025