



Decree No. 2023/001

**MOST REV TIMOTHY JAMES HARRIS**  
**By the grace of God and the authority of the Apostolic See**  
**BISHOP OF TOWNSVILLE**

**DECREE ON RECONFIGURATION OF PARISHES FOR MISSION**

**SACRED HEART PARISH AYR**  
and  
**ST JOSEPH'S PARISH GIRU**  
and  
**ST COLMAN'S PARISH HOME HILL**  
and  
**ST JOSEPH'S PARISH BURDEKIN VALLEY**

**WHEREAS:**

- A. To ensure the best provision of priestly ministry, parish mission renewal and pastoral care for the faithful of the separate Parishes of Sacred Heart Ayr, St Joseph's Giru, St Joseph's Burdekin Valley, and St Colman's Home Hill, I have determined that from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 there should be an extinctive union of the parishes of Sacred Heart Ayr, St Joseph's Giru, St Joseph's Burdekin Valley, and St Colman's Home Hill (the four separate parishes) thereby forming a new parish to be canonically known as Burdekin Catholic Parish and, for civil purposes, known as Burdekin Catholic Parish.
- B. I have consulted with the lay faithful of the four separate parishes. In March 2023, I met with the lay leaders from the parish pastoral councils and the finance councils of the four parishes to discuss the reconfiguration proposal. This proposal reflected the fact that one Administrator leads all parishes, and that these four parishes formed one Burdekin mission and ministry region from mid-2019. Over the subsequent six weeks, the lay leaders of each parish assisted with consultation of parishioners on the reconfiguration proposal. I returned to the region in early June to hear from the lay leaders of each parish, who had collated parishioner feedback on the proposal. Clearly, the parish communities had been well informed about the reconfiguration proposal through consultation, newsletters and other means. I heard in person and was provided with a copy of collated consultation responses, ranging across the spectrum from positive support, to acknowledgement of the necessity of reconfiguration for both mission and survival, to concerns about loss of identity, decline in local participation and various practical implementation matters. After careful listening and reflection, I am of the view that reconfiguration for mission will help to unite the four communities further for their missionary purpose whilst respecting the particular character of each.
- C. There is a need to give juridical effect to the reconfiguration of the four separate parishes.

**ACCORDINGLY, HAVING HEARD THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL, I THIS DAY DECREE:**

1. In accord with Canons 121 and 515 §2, the extinctive union of the former Parishes of Sacred Heart Ayr, St Joseph's Giru, St Joseph's Burdekin Valley and St Colman's Home Hill (the four former parishes) forming a new parish to be canonically known as Burdekin Catholic Parish and for civil purposes known as Burdekin Catholic Parish with effect, on and from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2023; and

2. That the following apply on and from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2023

- i. The Burdekin Catholic Parish (the Parish) constitutes the only parish within the (civil) Local Government Area of Burdekin Shire, and in accordance with Canon 518 has boundaries as illustrated in the attached map.
- ii. The Parish has juridic personality by the law itself (Canon 515, §3) with all the rights privileges and obligations attached thereto and is endowed with the property and goods of the four former parishes (without prejudice to the provisions of Canon 1300 1983 CIC and Canon 1514 1917CIC regarding the intention of donors).
- iii. The administration of the temporal affairs of the Parish is subject to the existing universal and diocesan laws as well as any applicable civil laws.
- iv. Given the extinctive union, the Parish assumes all the obligations binding the four former parishes.
- v. In accord with the norms of Canons 536 and 537 a parish pastoral council and a parish finance council must be established according to the norms of universal and diocesan law. As per my previous diocesan directives, the pastoral council will be called the Parish Mission Council, and the Pastor is also to establish a Parish Mission Leadership Team. Along with the Parish Finance Council, I direct that these bodies be established and operational by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2023.
- vi. The Parish must have its own parish registers (Canon 535 §§1-2 1983 CIC; Canon 470 1917 CIC)) containing entries on and from 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2023, its own parish seal (Canon 535 §3) and its own parish archives (Canon 535 §4 1983, Canon 470 1917 CIC).
- vii. The Registers of the four former parishes must be safeguarded in the archives of the Parish.
- viii. All Christian faithful constituting the People of God (c.204), who have a domicile or a quasi-domicile in the territory of the Parish defined in paragraph 2(i), belong by law to the Parish and have as their proper Pastor, Rev. Fr. Manoj Mathew CSsR (or his duly appointed successors) to whom the pastoral care of the designated community of the Parish is committed under my authority as Diocesan Bishop (Canon 515) as per appointment letter dated this same day.
- ix. I direct that this Decree be published by copies being displayed on noticeboards in the four parishes and posted to the parishes' webpages and social media sites for one calendar month from the weekend of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2023 when my pastoral letter is to be read to attending parishioners by the celebrants of Masses in the four parishes on that weekend.

DATED this 13th day of July, 2023

*+ Timothy J Harris*

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**Most Rev Timothy James Harris**  
**Bishop of Townsville**

*R. Ward*  
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**Rev Rodney T Ward**  
**Notary**



**Area Map of Burdekin Catholic Parish** showing that the parish boundary coincides with the Burdekin Shire boundary.



