



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

PARISH VISITATION REPORT

Parish of Sunshine

5 – 7 December 2025

Parish Priest : Fr. Peter-Damien McKinley

Assistant Priest : Fr. Peter Hoang

Priest in Residence: Fr. Peter Lal Zin Thang

Parish Secretary : Ms. Melizza Boongaling

School Principal : Mrs. Caroline Madigan
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Primary School,
Sunshine

Most Rev. Martin Ashe

Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne

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19 December 2025

Parish Community of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

Dear Fr. Peter-Damien and Parishioners of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish,

Warm greetings to you all.

I was pleased to be able to visit your Parish recently and spend some time with you and with your priests, Fr Peter-Damien McKinley, Parish Priest, Assistant Priest Fr Peter Hoang, and Priest in Residence, Fr Peter Lal Zin Thang. Over these days, I was listening to your many stories about the life of your Parish and your connectedness to the Parish. Some of you have been here for only a short time and many of you for a long time. I experienced the multicultural nature of your Parish, both in the variety of liturgies and through your social gatherings. I am grateful to you for all that was shared with me and through the rich varieties of groups, you gave me a sense of what Parish life was like for you at Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish.

Upon my arrival the priests and I prayed the morning prayer together in the chapel. This is part of your daily routine as priests in the Parish and in a special way praying for the community of faith.

MEETING WITH PARISH OFFICE TEAM:

Following this I met up with your Parish Secretary who works Monday, Wednesday and Friday. By January 2026, she will have worked three years in the Parish. You also have a volunteer who works on Friday mornings taking phone calls and organizing the power point for the weekend masses. You have a volunteer on Thursday who works on the Parish bulletin. The Parish migrated to PACEM in July 2022 and to Office 365 in October 2022. You are using PACEM for your website and online donations. Pacem is very much a part of the IT system of the Parish. You have two people counting your weekend collections early in the week. Your Parish Registers were reviewed and are in very good order.

VISITATION OF SUNSHINE GARDENS CARE COMMUNITY:

Mid- morning, Fr. Peter Zin, myself and one of the Ministers for Holy Communion of the Parish (who regularly visits the residents and brings them the Holy Eucharist) visited the Sunshine Gardens Aged Care Community. We visited a good number of people in the community, bringing them Holy Communion and blessing them. Members of the staff team were very welcoming to us during our time there.

Commend:

I commend the dedication and commitment of the Parishioners from your faith community of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception for visiting the Aged Care Community on a regular basis and assisting the priests in bringing Christ close to the people in their need.

OUR LADY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PRIMARY SCHOOL – MEETING WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM STUDENTS:

At 11.30am, I visited Our Lady's School to meet with the Principal and members of the Leadership Team. It is recognised as a very welcoming school and many families now have their grandchildren there. Currently, it has 317 students. It is a culturally diverse school community, with families from Australia, India, Myanmar, New Zealand, South Sudan, Vietnam and other cultural backgrounds too. You have cultivated an open-door policy for family and community engagement. What strengthens the faith aspect of your school is that the church building is just a few meters away, and is used by the teachers and their classes. The teachers of the school are also strong in their faith. You form your teachers to express the faith of the church in a way that the child can understand. You are committed especially through your regular times of prayer to draw your children into an encounter with Christ, helping them to grow in their relationship with God throughout their time in school. Your challenge is to continue to find quality teachers for your school in the years ahead.

You work in a collaborative way with your Parish Priest Fr Peter-Damien McKinley. He is very supportive and actively involved in the life of the school. You appreciate his spiritual guidance and pastoral leadership. You also strengthen the Parish and school connection through the use of Our Lady's School Hall for Sunday school lessons for students from the Our Lady's Chin Catholic Community - Burma/Myanmar. The presence of your new Principal, Mrs. Caroline Madigan at the recent Parish Feast event on the Saturday evening of December 6th with mass followed by a celebration meal in the Mariana Hall was a wonderful sign for all present to see the close bond between school and Parish. You hope that this bond will continue to grow stronger in the years ahead.

You have many occasions throughout the year when as a school community you celebrate the Eucharist. You also work collaboratively with the Parish to prepare candidates for and celebrate the Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation. You completed a major building project in 2024, which was opened at the end of that year and named it the St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. This new Learning centre was named in remembrance of the dedicated service of the sisters of St Joseph's who were involved in the school for more than 70 years until 2000.

Commend:

I commend you for your deep desire to continue to grow the Catholic identity of Our Lady's School and for your commitment to continue to enhance the relationship between School and Parish in the years ahead.

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE:

Following Lunch in the Presbytery, I met up with members of the Finance Committee. At the present time only two members were able to be there along with the Parish Accountant and your Parish Priest. The item that has been on the minds of the members of the Finance Committee for some time now is what to do with the "The Youth Centre" with its one and half acres of land owned by the Parish and currently substantially underutilized. You are now considering how to best leverage its use to generate an alternative income stream for the Parish and its future. You are being assisted in your present discussion by the Finance Team from the Archdiocese of Melbourne and also over several years advice from the Archdiocese Property Office, who facilitated the purchase of a house in 2016, so that for any potential future development, the site was no longer landlocked. The site is still being used. The Holy Redeemer Servant

Community have been meeting there for 38 years. The Tongan and The Chin communities use the halls at this site regularly

Your present financial position is in good shape. Since the pandemic and over the last five years, your Parish's overall financial position has improved with operating surpluses to especially service loan repayments from the Catholic Development Fund. You are conscious of the good response to the Active Giving program in the Parish. At the present time your mass attendance has been growing and is 1100 Parishioners and because of this your Active Giving has also increased in recent years.

Commend:

I commend you as members of the Finance Committee especially in addressing your present challenges in regard to seeking to do the right thing with the "The Youth Centre" property.

I commend you for your improved Active Giving response and your generosity in assisting the Parish in meeting its expenses and being able to respond to various pastoral and spiritual needs. You have also been generous in your response to the Archbishop's Campaign giving over \$15,000 in 2025.

Encourage:

I would encourage you to choose some additional members suitable to be part of your Finance Committee to assist you in addressing the financial challenges now and that may be faced in the coming years.

SWEET DECEMBER PARISH YOUTH FESTIVAL:

Observation:

It was wonderful to see so many young families present for the Chin Youth Festival at Our Lady's School Hall.

Commend:

I commend you for the sense of commitment you have in the support of the Chin Youth. It was good to see that the young people were also able and encouraged to sing both in Chin and in English. The music and the singing of the Christmas Carols was wonderful to see and hear. Activities such as these nurture the Catholic faith of the young and at the same time their faith is strengthened by having members of the broader Chin community present along with their Chaplain Fr. Peter Zin.

Thank you too for the welcome and hospitality shown to Fr Peter-Damien and myself which included sharing a meal with you all later.

SATURDAY MORNING 6 DECEMBER

PARISH FORUM: 11am

The Parish Forum was held at the Mariana Hall, your Parish hall with 25 – 30 people attending. As part of this number there were also people from the various cultural groups, Chin, Filipino, Tongan and Vietnamese. You are conscious of the presence of Jesus being shown in the community itself, your Parish Priest, within the gatherings that take place, in your musicians and your four choirs including your cultural communities.

The aspects that stand out for you are the Holy Redeemer Charismatic group, its music ministry and its regular Mass and spiritual formation. In this regard, you also spoke of

the 15 day Prayer and Life Workshops that enable you in deepening your relationship with God.

In regards to where you would like to be in five years' time, you spoke of the need for more younger volunteers as most of your volunteers are mainly seniors.

You would also like to see a deeper connection between all the cultural groups and gathering together regularly to share individual events and ideas to become a more integrated and vibrant multi-cultural community.

You would like to see more continuity in the programs you begin. For example, the Alpha Youth program once completed, there does not appear to be any follow up, which is what you would like to see. You would also like to see more formation programs for the people of the Parish. From a Parish perspective you would like to provide more email newsletters or updates.

As a community you would like to meet with members of the Leadership Team to reflect on your Parish and in what ways you might move forward into the future. You are conscious that since Covid there are smaller numbers of people attending masses and would like to see how the Parish could address this situation.

Observation:

While there were a variety of people from their cultural groups present, there were a number of individual parishioners who also attended the Forum.

Commend:

I commend the sense of commitment you all have to your faith and a deep love for your Parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. I also commend your desire to grow more as an overall community of faith. It was good to see your first Youth Alpha program taking place, as it was a sign of you inviting the young to grow in their faith and following of Jesus.

Encourage:

It is clear from your own feedback that there is a need for more volunteers across the Parish. It is to call forth the giftedness within the community and for the members of your Leadership Team to play an active role in addressing this important element in growing a Parish. There may be other Parishes nearby who might be worth contacting in ways that may have worked for them.

LUNCH WITH PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM AND PARISH PRIEST:

A presentation was given by Fr Peter-Damien about the various instances to have parishioners sharing with him in giving some direction and co-ordination to the life of the Parish. When he arrived 2016, there was no one group sharing in the co-ordination of the different aspects of Parish life. In the end there were a number of different Cultural groups that began to emerge and this was especially so after Covid. Together with the Parish Priest, they became the Leadership Team Group which included the Chin, Filipinos, Tongan and Vietnamese. Out of this came the Parish Feast day where all groups and parishioners came together to celebrate this one event. An example of this could be seen in the Easter Vigil of 2025 where there was one Vigil celebration for the Parish, compared to previous years when there were three different language masses.

Encourage:

It is important not to lose sight of our primary reason for existing as a community of faith. It is to proclaim Christ and his Gospel to all people of our time. It is to give witness to

Christ's love for us and to grow in this relationship. Pope Francis kept reminding us that we are not only disciples, but we are missionary disciples sent by the Spirit into the world around us. In order to do this well we need to address how we can become a more vibrant Catholic community

One response might be that in the midst of your rich heritage of diverse cultural groupings within your Parish, it is also to appreciate, that you are all part of the one community of faith within Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Parish. So, it would be great for you all to strengthen your bonds of fellowship as Parishioners of the one faith community, while continuing across your cultural groups. It is to grow that unity of faith and love in the midst of your diversity and to do this in an intentional way within small groups and large ones. It is to meet, to reflect, to pray, to celebrate more across the different cultures. We become a more vibrant community when we share our Christian lives together. Indeed, it is to welcome all Parishioners to be part of these fellowship groupings including the families in your school. In many ways your Parish Feast Day Mass with the celebration of the Eucharist followed by the dinner was a very good indication of this. All Parishioners were invited and all were included.

In order to do this effectively, it is important to begin anew to increase the number of Parishioners on your Leadership Team. It is to choose those who will collaborate together with your Parish Priest. Ultimately, it is to embrace with new hope "Take the Way of the Gospel" and its framework for Parish Renewal in becoming a vibrant, vital and viable community of faith in Sunshine. Please feel free to contact the Proclaim team to assist you. Their phone number is 0399265761

COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING:

I met with some members of your Safeguarding Team. You have been embracing the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct. All Catechism group leaders hold current Working with Children checks. You have implemented several risk-mitigation strategies in practice. You regularly communicate items in your Newsletters and on the PowerPoint screen at the start of each Mass, to remind the faith community of the need to be committed to the care, wellbeing and protection of children and the vulnerable.

Commend:

I commend you for the efforts you have made in ensuring that the Parish is continuing to work at making the Parish a safe and caring environment for children and the vulnerable.

Encourage:

While you have some people from the community as part of a team to be responsible for the Safeguarding Standards to be implemented, I encourage you to bring a few more new members on to your team. It is a way to continue to nurture a safe and protective environment for our children and vulnerable adults. It is also important to ensure that all volunteers have completed the Safeguarding Essentials training. Early in the coming year, 2026, it would be good to invite Hailey Elkington (0467089265) your Safeguarding Officer for the Western Region to your next meeting to assist you in any way in the continuous implementation of the Safeguarding Protocols.

SITE REVIEW:

At 2pm, Fr. Peter-Damien and I went to the "Youth Center" land and its buildings including the Scout Hall and Tennis Club Hall which in recent times is being discussed as to future possibilities. On the main Parish site, which the Church and Parish Primary School share,

I was also shown the Fr. John Maher Auditorium and the St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Centre including the Mariana Hall. These were all fine facilities for school and Parish. Your presbytery is a home for the three priests and currently the Parish Office is also within the same building, but intentionally separated for the benefit of all.

6pm PARISH FEAST DAY CELEBRATION MASS:

Having the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist with the community of faith is at the heart of our ministry of service. The Lord draws us more deeply into his reconciling and healing love. It is not only being personally renewed, but we are drawn into a deeper unity with each other in the community of faith and we are strengthened to be his presence in the world. Having music and singing gave life to our celebrations together. It was also good for me to be able to offer words of encouragement at the beginning of the masses I was not able to celebrate and it was also pleasing to meet up with Parishioners after the mass.

It was good to be with you at your Parish feast day and it was a wonderful celebration of your feast day mass with a full church of worshippers including music and singing from the Tongan and Vietnamese choirs. After the final prayer, the new Principal of Our Lady's Primary School was introduced to the faith community. This was followed by a lovely meal at Mariana Hall put together by the different cultural groups in the Parish.

SUNDAY MORNING MASSES:

9.am Sunday morning Mass. This mass included music and singing, readers and Minister for Holy Communion were part of the Eucharist and I was also able to meet with Parishioners afterwards.

I had the opportunity to greet others at the beginning of their masses in Vietnamese at 12.30pm and in Chin at 2.30pm.

I was introduced to and brought Holy Communion to Parishioners who are house bound and who attend the Cathedral Mass through live streaming.

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Following lunch at 1.30pm, I was introduced in the Hall to members of the Chin Youth Group involved in their catechetical programme. In a special way, I was pleased to meet 12 of the Chin young people who were part of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival which was held a few days prior to my visit. They each spoke of how good it was to be with all the other young people and the experience of being part of the personal testimonies being shared and wonderful hymns that they enjoyed singing; and also being able to go to Reconciliation with so many other young people. Fr Zin was their Chaplain.

Observation:

The young people were so at home in speaking about their faith and how good it was to be with other similar young people at ACYF

Commend:

I commend the Chin Community for financially raising funds to assist their young people to go to the festival.

Encourage:

I encourage you to attend other activities for young people being held within the Western Region in 2026.

I was able to be with the priests at different times over the few days.

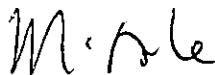
Fr. Peter-Damien McKinley has been your Parish Priest since 2016. He enjoys being part of a community with a variety of Parishioners, many from different parts of the world. He has sought to respond wholeheartedly to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the people in Sunshine. He has also built up a very strong relationship with Our Lady's School Community. He is very supportive of the teachers. He enjoys being part of the Sacramental programmes with the families and their children and celebrating the sacraments with them. He is very committed to the Parish and people say he is too generous with his time and that more parishioners could be involved in the care and work of the Parish. He appreciates what the other priests Fr. Peter Hoang and Fr. Peter Zin are also contributing for the people and in particular within their own language groups. He looks forward to being able to celebrate with the Parish its hundredth-year anniversary in a years' time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Fr. Peter Hoang and Fr. Peter Lal Zin Thang for their continual spiritual and pastoral care for the overall parish community. You both are generous in celebrating the various language Masses in Vietnamese and in Chin, and hosting Masses in the Tongan language sometimes throughout the year, as these celebrations assist in building up the community of faith within your wider multicultural community.

I would like to thank you all for the welcome and hospitality shown to me over my days of visitation with you. It has been wonderful to meet up with so many of you and to listen to the many stories of your Parish, how so many families have been able to settle down here in this part of Melbourne and how the Parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception has given you a sense of belonging here. Your Catholic faith not only nourishes you but you too are called be a witness to Christ's love in the community around you. The Holy Spirit that was so central to the life of Mary, enabling her to respond to what God was asking of her in fulfilling his divine plan for the World. She gave her "Yes" to being the Mother of the Lord. This same Holy Spirit is also with you to guide you and give you the generosity of heart to reach out to many around you and allow that same love of Christ to give joy and hope to others.

May the Lord bless you and all your families.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Ashe'.

+Martin Ashe
Auxiliary Bishop for the Western Region