

REUNIFICATION OF THE PARISHES: SAINT IGNATIUS AND SAINT JAMES

Our parish communities have decided to proceed to reunification. We speak of reunification, rather than amalgamation, because the St James parish was originally part of the St Ignatius parish boundaries.

In 1931, with an increased Catholic population at the time, the area covering St James parish was handed over to the care of the diocesan clergy. Since August 1998, the two parishes have been in partnership, with a common Parish Priest, and with a common Parish Leadership Team.

Now that a commitment to reunify the parishes has been taken, we need to determine what should be presented in our submission for approval by Archbishop Hart.

An important element of our submission will be the name of the new parish incorporating our two existing parishes.

Several possible names have been proposed in our earlier discussions:

- St Ignatius Parish:
incorporating the churches of St James and St Ignatius
- Richmond Catholic Parish:
incorporating St Ignatius and St James churches.
- St Ignatius / St James Parish
- Loyola Parish
incorporating the churches of St Ignatius and St James
- Parish of St James / St Ignatius

Centres of Worship:

Whatever name is accepted by the Archbishop, it is clear that we wish to maintain the distinctive character of each of our two places of worship.

The St James Church celebrated its centenary in the year 2000 and has a distinctive local community spirit which must be maintained and strengthened. The parish of St Ignatius was established in 1867 and the church on Richmond Hill is a landmark in Melbourne.

Both will continue to be centres of worship for the Catholic community of Melbourne. Both church communities need to increase their outreach pastoral ministry, their education in the faith and their leadership training in the coming twelve months.

Resources and Assets of the Two Parishes:

Both existing parishes have certain resources and assets and our discussions to date indicate that neither community would be seriously disadvantaged by a merger. Each parish has assets available in buildings and land and neither parish comes to the partnership with a financial debt.

As part of the reunification, the assets and financial resources of both parishes would be merged into one.

Provision of Catholic Primary Education:

The review of the provision of catholic education in the existing two parishes is proceeding during the months of April and May. Whatever the final outcome, it is clear that the future will involve a closer collaboration or amalgamation of the two schools situated at St Ignatius and St James.

The outcome of the educational review is not a substantial matter impacting on the reunification proposal. Whatever the outcome, students at our two local schools stand to benefit by an enhanced provision of catholic education in the Richmond community.

Expression a commitment to Christian Unity:

With rapidly changing demographics, it is important that we take the initiative in planning together how we can be more effective as a Catholic ministry reaching out to the people of Richmond.

The first step towards greater collaboration with others is for the Catholic community of Richmond to form one Christian community of faith. We need to express unity in Richmond as a Catholic community, before we can proceed with further steps towards Christian unity.

Process of the Reunification:

After almost seven years of partnership between the two parishes, it is accepted that we proceed with submitting a proposal for reunification to Archbishop Hart without delay.

The Archbishop is required to first seek the advice of his Diocesan Consultors and the Senate of Priests. His final decision will be made after their advice is sought.

We hope to be able to celebrate the reunification of our two parishes during the month of July, with the feast of St James being the 25th July and the feast of St Ignatius, the 31st.

Father Peter Norden, S.J.
Parish Priest
24th April 2005.