

TWO NEW AUXILIARY BISHOPS FOR MELBOURNE

Pope Francis has this evening announced the appointment of two new auxiliary bishops of Melbourne, the Reverend Monsignor Anthony Ireland and the Reverend Father Martin Ashe. Monsignor Ireland is currently parish priest of St Gregory's Doncaster and the Episcopal Vicar for Health and Aged Care. Fr Martin Ashe is the parish priest of Christ the Light Parish Mernda, Whittlesea and Kinglake.

'On behalf of God's faithful of Melbourne, I am delighted with this great news, and am deeply grateful to the Holy Father for these gifts to our Archdiocese,' said Archbishop Peter A Comensoli.

'Each of these fine priests have made valuable contributions to the life of the local Church; each know this Archdiocese well and have a wide experience of dedicated ministry; and each will bring unique skills and missionary energy to our local communities of faith.'
'They are men of deep prayer and service – with hearts for those in need and a passion to share and live the Gospel amongst God's people.'

Bishop-elect Ireland was born and raised in Melbourne. After completing high school, he spent several years studying and working in the business sector before entering Corpus Christi Seminary. After his ordination in 1987, he served in a number of parishes and undertook further studies, later lecturing at the Catholic Theological College and leading the department of moral and practical theology.

He would later serve as dean of studies and then rector of Corpus Christi College Seminary, before returning to parish ministry. Among many archdiocesan and provincial appointments, Msgr Ireland has served for many years as Melbourne's Episcopal Vicar for Health and Aged Care and as Episcopal Vicar for the Eastern Region of the Archdiocese.

Msgr Ireland reflected that having supported archdiocesan leadership over many years, he knows of 'the joyful consolations, the crosses, and silent sorrows that those in high office carry'. 'So, I accept this appointment from the Holy Father with the hope that I can keep a positive balance and attitude whilst continually trusting in the Lord Jesus who promised to accompany us until the end of time,' he said. 'The ministry of auxiliary bishop comes with no agenda. It is a ministry of humility; I am to closely assist Archbishop Comensoli in his mission as Chief Shepherd in Melbourne.'

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President Archbishop Mark Coleridge said Msgr Ireland and Fr Ashe bring varied experiences, including in parish ministry and clergy formation, to their new role. 'They know the Archdiocese of Melbourne intimately, but they have also been involved on the national level,' he said. 'The Conference looks forward to welcoming them and working with them as the journey of the Plenary Council leads us into the future.'

Msgr Ireland and Fr Ashe will join Bishop Terry Curtin, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne and Episcopal Vicar for the Northern Region, in supporting Archbishop Peter A Comensoli in Australia's most populous diocese.

The episcopal ordination for Msgr Ireland and Fr Ashe is expected to take place in late July. Born in Melbourne in 1957 to Bernard and Elizabeth Ireland (both deceased), Anthony Ireland undertook his early education through St Aloysius School Caulfield and De la Salle College Malvern.

Following some years working and studying in the business sector, he entered Corpus Christi College for seminary studies in 1981 and was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Little at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne on 19 September 1987.

Early appointments were at Grovedale, Mentone, Sandringham, Langwarrin and Frankston. During this time Fr Ireland also undertook further studies and lectured in Moral Theology at Catholic Theological College, being appointed Head of the Department of Moral and Practical Theology there in 1997.

In 2005, he was appointed Dean of Studies at Corpus Christi College Seminary Carlton and appointed Rector of the College in 2006, a position he held until 2009. Bishop-elect Ireland was then appointed Parish Priest of St Gregory's Doncaster (a position he holds today): appointed Episcopal Vicar for Health and Aged Care; and became a Prelate of Honour.

He has served the Archdiocese of Melbourne in many capacities as: a member of the CDF Board and Ministry to Priests; a Director of Catholic Capital Grants (Victoria) Ltd; as the Archbishop's appointee to the Archbishop's Melbourne Senate; Archbishop's Curia; member of the College of Consultors; as Commissioner and Assessor for the Diocesan and Extension and Maintenance Fund; and as School Chaplain and Canonical Administrator to varying Colleges at Mentone, Frankston and Bulleen, and as Chaplain to the Catholic Nurses Guild. He was the Spiritual Adviser to the State Council of St Vincent de Paul for eight years.

In continuing his work as Parish Priest of Doncaster, he was reappointed to his position as the Episcopal Vicar for Health and Aged Care and is also the Episcopal Vicar for the Eastern Region of the Archdiocese.

Bishop-elect Ireland holds the degrees of Bachelor of Theology from the University of Divinity, Master of Arts in Spiritual Theology from the Pontifical University of St Thomas (Rome), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (Moral Theology) from the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome), and Doctor of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University of St Thomas (Rome).