



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Pope Francis appoints Fr Timothy Harris, Sixth Bishop of Townsville

**Media Release
8 February 2017**

The Holy Father has today appointed Fr Timothy Harris, a priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, as the sixth Bishop of Townsville.

Bishop-Elect Harris is currently the Parish Priest of Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast.

Speaking about his new appointment, Bishop-Elect Harris said, 'I'm very conscious that the Diocese of Townsville has been without a bishop for three years. It has been on all of our minds. If the bishop is a sign of unity, which he is, I hope that I can strengthen the unity of the vast Diocese of Townsville and build on the work of Bishop Michael Putney and, since his death, on the efforts of Diocesan Administrator, Fr Mick Lowcock, the Parish Priest of Mount Isa.

'I've been a pastor all my life so I would like to understand the diocese through the eyes of the local people. I'd like to build on the good things going on in the diocese already. As the new bishop, I will need to listen to the local experience and learn from the people.'

Welcoming the new appointment, Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said, 'Together with the bishops of Australia, priests and people of Townsville, I welcome the announcement of Fr Timothy Harris as Bishop of Townsville. Fr Tim is a fine priest and has been a wonderful pastor in a large parish. I rejoice with the people of Townsville as they prepare to welcome their new shepherd who will serve with renowned generosity'.

Born in Brisbane on 29 October 1962, Bishop-Elect Harris received his primary education at Nundah Convent and Virginia State School and secondary education at St Joseph's Nudgee College. Joining the Bank of New South Wales, he worked in public relations for five years.

In 1991, Bishop-Elect Harris graduated with a Bachelor of Theology. After priestly formation at Pius XII Provincial Seminary in Banyo, Brisbane, he was ordained a Deacon on 5 June 1992 and ordained a Priest on 18 November 1992. During his priestly ministry, the Bishop-Elect served as Associate Pastor in the parishes of Grovely and Caboolture, and as Parish Priest in Corinda Graceville (1996-2010) and Surfers Paradise (2010-2017). He has also served the Archdiocese of Brisbane as the Dean of Western Deanery and the South Coast Deanery, as Chair of the Taskforce for Pastoral Planning, and as a Member of Personnel Board, the Clergy Appointment Advisory Board and the Council of Priests.

Bishop-Elect Harris said, 'I am excited at the prospect of serving as Bishop of Townsville, yet I realise that this is a huge task and I am not going to be able to do this without the grace of God.'

'We belong to a universal church. As a bishop, I will have to act locally but also lead the diocese as part of the universal church, united with the Holy Father. Both the local and universal church dimensions will shape my leadership.'

Asked about his interests, Bishop-Elect Harris laughed that he enjoys Irish music, particularly ballads. Living in Surfers Paradise, he enjoys the beach. I have a general appreciation of all sports, however I know that the word in Townsville is "Cowboys" and I think, out of necessity, I will be following them.'

His parents, Shirley and Jim, and sister Jennifer live in Brisbane. 'Mum and Dad have been on my mind a lot since the news, as they are in their nineties and live in Brisbane. I drive to visit them every week but now I'll be taking a plane down to see them less often.'

The Office of Bishop has been vacant in the Diocese of Townsville since the death of Bishop Michael Putney on 28 March 2014. The date of Bishop-Elect Harris' Episcopal Ordination will be announced soon.

Media queries, please contact Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597 or media@catholic.org.au