

## **EPHING AND CARLINGFORD - TWO COMMUNITIES, ONE PARISH**

### **Our recent history**

On 1st July 2007 our two parishes became one parish with the name of *The Catholic Parish of Epping and Carlingford*. However in the model we are following we still retain two distinct, though collaborating, communities.

At the beginning of the year 2000 the two parishes of Epping and Carlingford, centred on Our Lady Help of Christians' Church and St Gerard's Church respectively, entered into a unique relationship through the sharing of a common Parish Priest (Fr Colin Blayney). This was part of a diocesan wide process that sought to address an imbalance whereby different regions of the diocese had widely varying sizes of parish (in terms of population) – largely due to the fact that the increasingly urbanised Central Coast region in the north of the diocese had originally been mixture of semi-rural area with scattered holiday settlements. This meant that at the very least consideration needed to be given to parishes in the southern part of the diocese (comprising the northern suburbs of Sydney) entering into partnerships whereby they shared a common Parish Priest and perhaps even considered uniting to form a single parish (with a combined population commensurate with the size of parishes throughout all parts of the diocese).

### **Cooperation and collaboration**

Accordingly, over the following years the two parishes engaged in increasing collaboration and sharing of resources. As the number of shared programmes and activities increased the two Parish Pastoral Councils decided that, while they remained technically separate bodies, they would always meet in joint sitting and engage in pastoral planning together. By the beginning of 2006 and the two Councils in consultation with the Parish Priest easily reached the consensus that the time was approaching to take the formal step of becoming a single parish. It was felt that this would not result in any further change to the day to day life of our two communities since all the steps in increasing collaboration had already been taken. It was agreed that the model would be a single parish at the level of administration and organisation but made up of two distinct, though collaborating and cooperating, communities. This model will help us to combine our resources in order to best serve the Gospel and the building of God's Kingdom while fostering the on-going life of two vibrant Christian communities.

Amongst the programmes and pastoral activities which are carried out in a collaborative way are: youth and young adult groups, adult education, 50+ group, sacramental preparation programmes for Baptism, Confirmation, First Reconciliation and First Communion and the RCIA. As of the recent elections we now have a single Parish Pastoral Council made up of equal numbers of members from our two worshipping communities. As of July 2007 there will be a single Finance Committee for the administration of the finances and properties of the new parish. Since 2005 the two communities have shared a common weekly bulletin and twice yearly parish magazine.

### **Shared Parish Staff**

For some years now all staff members have been employed in a collaborative way and exercise their ministry in both communities equally. The parish staff includes our Parish Priest, Fr Colin Blayney; our Pastoral Worker, Sr Pauline Wicks rsj; Parish Secretary, Dennis Porteous; Parish

Priest's Secretary, Susan Bateman; Pastoral Care Assistant and Assistant Parish Secretary, Maree Balzulat; our Youth Ministry Coordinators: Diana Popic, Lucia Smith, Sarah Black and Clavell Lee; and Lucia Smith and Julie Astalosh, our Sacramental Programme Coordinators.