



# Pastoral Letter

St Francis Xavier Cathedral, St John Vianney Co-Cathedral, St Brigid's Church & Mater Dolorosa Church

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

My heart is heavy as I write to you in the wake of recent events that have deeply shaken our community and our nation. Once again, we are confronted with the painful reality of violence, hatred, and fear—realities that stand in direct contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The acts of Terror at Bondi were a murderous attack on the lives and dignity of Jewish people and on the security and peace of all Australians.

I echo with conviction the cry of Pope Leo XIV, heard around the world: **"Enough with these forms of antisemitic violence!"** There can be no place for hatred directed toward our Jewish brothers and sisters, or toward any people because of their faith, culture, or identity. Such violence wounds not only those directly affected, but the very soul of our society. As people of faith, we must name this evil clearly, reject it firmly, and work tirelessly for peace, dignity, and mutual respect.

The Church has spoken with clarity and authority on this matter. At the Second Vatican Council, the Church taught:

**"We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation**

**to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God' (1 John 4:8)."** (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 5, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on 28 October 1965.)

These words remain as urgent today as when they were first proclaimed. Antisemitism, and every form of hatred or violence, is not only a social evil—it is a grave moral wrong, utterly incompatible with the Gospel of Christ.

In this spirit, we recall the words of **Pope Leo XIV**, who reminds us:

**"Hatred, once allowed to take root, darkens the human heart and blinds us to the image of God in one another. Peace begins when we choose courage over fear and love over indifference."**

We are united in profound sadness following the tragic events at **Bondi**, which have left families grieving and a community traumatised. The shock and sorrow felt across Australia remind us how fragile life is, and how urgently our world needs healing, understanding, and hope. To all who mourn, to those injured, and to all who feel unsettled or afraid, please know that you are not alone. Our parish stands with you in prayer and solidarity.

I wish to express our sincere thanks to the police, first responders, paramedics, medical staff, and lifesavers, whose courage, professionalism, and compassion saved lives and brought comfort amid chaos. Their service reflects the very best of humanity, and we give thanks to God for their dedication and selfless commitment.

As a parish, we will gather in prayer and remembrance. **This Friday, 19 December, at St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Bishop Brian Mascord** will offer the **12.10pm Mass for those who have died**, for their families, and for all who are grieving. This will be a sacred moment to commend the deceased to God's mercy and to ask the Lord to strengthen our community in hope and unity. I warmly encourage you to join us.

Later that evening, at **7pm**, we will gather once more at the Cathedral for the **lighting of the Cathedral Christmas tree**. The Christmas tree is more than a seasonal symbol—it is a sign of **light, faith, and community**. Its lights remind us that even in the darkest moments, Christ remains our light, and the darkness will not overcome it. This gathering will be a moment of solidarity and hope, as we stand together as a parish and as a wider community of faith.

As we approach the celebration of Christmas, may we recommit ourselves to being people of peace. Let us reject all forms of violence and prejudice, speak up for what is right, and live as true witnesses to the love of Christ.

May the Lord bless our nation, heal the wounded, comfort the grieving, protect those who serve, and lead us all along the path of peace.

With my prayers and pastoral care,

**FR BERNARD L GORDON** VG  
PARISH PRIEST &  
DEAN OF THE CATHEDRAL

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