

Reflection at Farewell Luncheon for Discalced Carmelite Fathers
From
The Parish of St Ives and the Diocese of Broken Bay
19 April 2026

Fr David Ranson VG

Bishop Homeming, Fr Greg Chee and Friars of the Discalced Carmelite community, Fr Paul Durkin, Deacon Tan, and friends from St Ives parish.

It is my privilege to be here with you this afternoon on behalf of Archbishop Randazzo who cannot be with us, but who sends his warmest regards. Archbishop Anthony flies this afternoon to Perth in his capacity as the Apostolic Administrator of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of the Southern Cross for the ordination of two men to the Ordinariate. I am very happy to share however that he will join the Parish on Sunday 7 June, the Parish's Patronal Feast Day, at which time he will install Fr Paul Durkin as the new Parish Priest. It will be his last public act before he leaves us to assume his new appointment in Rome.

As we come together to enjoy this meal, we do so with a mixture of gratitude, affection, and a great deal of poignancy as we mark the departure of the Discalced Carmelite Friars from the parish of St Ives, a parish of our Diocese entrusted to their care since 2008. For nearly two decades, the Friars have lived among us certainly not simply as administrators or even as ministers, but I think much more significantly as brothers, as men of prayer, of presence, and of quiet fidelity. Therefore, there is an unmistakable sense of loss on their departure.

We recognise that this moment of departure does not arise in isolation. It is part of a broader development within Religious Life, particularly here in Australia. Like many communities, the friars are facing the realities of changing numbers, ageing membership, and the need to reconfigure their presence so as to remain faithful to their mission into the future. These are not easy decisions, and they have not been made lightly by the Order. They have required discernment, courage, and a trust that God continues to lead, even through uncertainty, and I know that Archbishop Anthony has been deeply appreciative that we have been able to continue to enjoy the presence and care of the Friars for the last several years since that discernment was made. Now the Friars leave not because their work here has diminished in value, but precisely because their vocation calls them now to be present in different ways and places.

In light of all this, then, it is right, that first of all we give thanks. We give thanks to God for the gift of the Carmelite vocation, and for the generous way that vocation has been poured out amongst us. It has been the mission of the Friars to nurture a parish community in the spirit of the Gospel, shaped by the rich and ancient charism of Carmel, and I know that this has been very much the heart of Fr Greg who has given his everything to the parish community.

That charism is a particular gift to the Church. It is contemplative, grounded in a deep, personal encounter with God. It teaches us that the most important work of the Church is not what is immediately visible, but what is quietly transformative: prayer, attentiveness to the presence of God, and a life lived in interior freedom. The Carmelite tradition, drawing from saints like Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross, reminds us that God is not distant, but intimately near, dwelling within us, inviting each of us into communion.

Over these years, the Friars have offered this gift to the Parish of St Ives and to the Diocese not only in their preaching and sacramental ministry, but in the tone and texture of parish life itself. They have

fostered a spirit of reflection in the midst of busyness, of silence in a noisy world, and of depth in an age often marked by distraction. Many of us will know personally the steady guidance of their spiritual direction, the reverence of their liturgy, and the quiet strength of their pastoral care.

And what, then, of our parish?

I know I speak for Archbishop Anthony when I say that the departure of the Friars does not mean the loss of what they have given the parish community. On the contrary, what has been sown here over these years remains. The habits of prayer, the depth of faith, the sense of community are not tied to any one group, but live now within you.

The future of our Parish then does not begin from nothing. I know from my conversations with Fr Paul that it will be built upon the foundation that has been laid, patiently, faithfully, and with love. The work of the Friars has prepared the ground for what comes next. And just as they once entrusted themselves to this community, so now the Archbishop entrusts this community to its next chapter, confident that the Spirit who has been at work here will continue to guide and sustain it.

To the Friars, we say: thank you. Thank you for your fidelity to your vocation, for your generosity, and for the quiet witness of your lives. You have left an imprint here that will endure long after your departure.

To the parish community, we say: take heart. What has been given to you is not being taken away. It is now yours to carry forward—to deepen, to embody, and to share with those who will come after you.

We commend this moment to God: with gratitude for the past, with companionship in the present, and with trust in the future.

And so we pray:

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
for the years of faithful service we have received,
and for the quiet ways you continue to nourish your people.

We thank you for the presence and care of the Carmelite Friars among us—
for the prayer they have taught us,
for the depth they have sown within us,
and for the gentle witness of lives given over to you.

As we share this meal,
remind us that your grace abides,
that what has been planted in faith will continue to grow,
and that you are leading us forward into a future filled with hope.

Bless this food, bless our fellowship,
and strengthen us to carry forward the good work begun among us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.