



*Letter to Clergy and Parishioners in the Diocese of Broken Bay*

Thursday 12 January 2023

My dear brothers and sisters

As Administrator of the Diocese whilst Bishop Randazzo is on leave, I offer this small tribute from our Diocese of Broken Bay to the late Cardinal George Pell who passed away in Rome on 11 January 2023.

When such a figure as colossal and as complex as Cardinal Pell passes away, we recognise that a particular moment in history has discovered us. It is a reflective moment that seeks to take stock of the influence of a person unequalled in the experience of the Church of Australia. The future will both further reveal and analyse the phenomenal nature of Cardinal Pell's life, his experience, his contribution. It is not for me now to offer insight into this. It is, however, for me to acknowledge that the Australian Church has been undeniably shaped by his leadership over so many decades. His passing represents a defining moment for the Catholic community in Australia, and of course, not only in Australia, but across the world given his international presence and ministry. No other Australian Catholic churchman has exercised such global influence.

Cardinal Pell's episcopal motto, *Be Not Afraid*, summarises that remarkable approach by which he sought both to arrest what he interpreted as an ecclesial life in danger of losing its identity and purpose, and to ensure that the Church did not lose its voice in the public domain. His stature and calibre, his determination, and his temperament, catapulted him into a status charged with significance of such complex dimensions, particularly given the challenges of the last twenty years through which we have struggled with the exposure of sexual abuse in our community. Yet, in the midst of this, Cardinal Pell retained always to those who knew him personally a compassionate camaraderie and disarming humour. There was a simplicity in him that was unmistakable to those closest to him.

My own personal association with Cardinal Pell extends nearly 40 years – I first met him when he was Principal of Aquinas College, Ballarat in the late 1970s. Through all his subsequent appointments as Rector of Corpus Christi Seminary, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, Archbishop of Melbourne and Archbishop of Sydney, our relationship developed through various twists and turns. Though we both tacitly accepted that we “did not read the same books,” Cardinal Pell was unfailingly kind, generous and encouraging of me in my own appointments and engagements which often brought us together. I recall with fondness the morning spent with him in his office in Rome when he was Vatican Prefect of the Secretariat of the Economy I owe him a personal debt of gratitude for the manner in which he allowed me to make my own contribution to the Church.

**Very Rev Dr David Ranson**



Our own memories of Cardinal Pell will be a mixture, not least shaped by the media's perception of his indomitable character. Yet, all of us cannot but be in awe of his steadfastness, his loyalty, his perseverance, his fidelity, his commitment to what he believed was right and just. Robust and passionate, his death leaves an unmistakable vacuum.

At this time, I am especially conscious that many of those who exercise senior leadership in our Diocese of Broken Bay knew Cardinal Pell as a friend and colleague, having worked closely with him for many years when he was Archbishop of Sydney. This moment is a particularly sad one for them and on your behalf, I extend to them our deepest sympathy on the loss of such a confidante and mentor. I extend, too, our condolences to Cardinal Pell's family, particularly his brother, David.

The funeral details of the late Cardinal are currently being considered and we will join with the Archdiocese of Sydney in whichever way we can to ensure that the life and legacy of the Cardinal is given every fitting acknowledgement.

In the meantime, a Memorial Mass will be offered at Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral Waitara at 6.00pm on Monday 16 January, the day on which a funeral Mass for the late Cardinal will be celebrated in Rome. The faithful of the Diocese are invited to join together in prayer for Cardinal Pell.

We commend the soul of Cardinal George Pell to Almighty God in the knowledge that he fought the race of faith to the very end. Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. And may his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Ranson', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Very Rev Dr David Ranson  
Administrator of the Diocese  
In the absence of Bishop Anthony Randazzo

**Very Rev Dr David Ranson**