



We proclaim a crucified Christ

1Cor1.23

07 November 2025

To the Parishioners of Malvern, Malvern East and Glen Iris

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is with gratitude and hope that I share with you news of a significant initiative in the life of our Archdiocese.

Three years ago, Fr Michael Gallacher first approached me with a prayerful desire to begin an Oratory of St Philip Neri in Melbourne. After a significant period of discernment, consultation, and preparation, I am now pleased to announce the beginning of an **Oratory Project** here in our Archdiocese, commencing with your family of Parishes.

An Oratory of St Philip Neri is a particular expression of priestly community—secular priests and seminarians living together in a stable household, bound not by religious vows, but by the bond of charity. This way of life is distinct from both diocesan and religious priesthood. It offers a unique witness to fraternity, spiritual depth, and pastoral availability in the service of the local Church.

The development of an Oratory follows three stages: an **Oratory Project**, an **Oratory-in-Formation**, and, God willing, a fully established **Oratory**. With my blessing, and the support of the Procurator-General of the Confederation of the Oratory in Rome, we now begin the first stage.

From 16 November 2025, **Fr Michael Gallacher**, along with **Mr Anthony Wright** and **Mr Patrick Harris**, will begin living as a Melbourne Oratory Project community within the *family of parishes of Malvern, Malvern East, and Glen Iris*. Fr Gallacher remains a Priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and Parish Priest of your Parishes. Anthony and Patrick will continue as seminarians of our Archdiocese, though now as part of the Melbourne Oratory Project community. They will

still receive their academic formation at Catholic Theological College, and other elements of formation through Corpus Christi College Regional Seminary as required.

This is a moment of great hope and possibility—not only for these men, but for our wider Church. The Oratory tradition, inspired by the joyful witness of St Philip Neri, has borne much fruit around the world. My prayer is that it will do likewise here in Melbourne, fostering a deeper spiritual life, priestly fraternity, and missionary zeal.

I invite you to keep Fr Michael, Anthony, and Patrick in your prayers as they take this first step. May their community life be rooted in charity, sustained by prayer, and poured out in loving service of God's people.

And may St Philip Neri, the Apostle of Joy, intercede for them and for us all.

With every grace and blessing, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A Comensoli', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne



Malvern, Malvern East and Glen Iris Family of Parishes

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7th November 2025

Dear parishioners,

We write this letter to accompany the letter from the Archbishop, announcing the beginning of an Oratory Project in our family of parishes.

We are grateful to the Archbishop for discerning this with us over the last three years. His wisdom, fatherly guidance and prayer have been a source of inspiration and support as we have sought to understand God's will in placing this desire in each of our hearts.

We are grateful for the formation and guidance we have received from members of Oratories in other parts of the world, including those at the Confederation of the Oratory in Rome.

Each Oratory develops its unique character and apostolate according to its local circumstances. What has developed at St Roch's over nine years, and is developing at Holy Eucharist, St Mary's and St Joseph's, is an apostolate that has inspired us to found an Oratory here. Many seek confession and spiritual direction on a regular basis, with youth and families being particularly drawn to this. We have a hospital, nursing homes and schools in which we accompany people in the faith. We hope that the Oratory will grow as it serves this apostolate and remain stable here for the faithful for years to come.

Many of you have commented positively on the difference you have noticed here when we have all been resident in the parishes together over the last few years. We find the fruit of the apostolate is so much richer when we are all working together. By living in community, we also encourage each other to strive for holiness.

We are excited about beginning what we hope will become a stable community of priests and seminarians in our family of parishes. We look forward to accompanying you and your families for years to come, modelling ourselves as much as we are able, and by the grace of God, on the example of St Philip Neri.

Who is St Philip Neri?

St Philip lived in 16th Century Rome, initially as a layman looking after the sick and forming young people in the faith. During this period, he embraced a life of poverty and simplicity, and spent many hours of his day in prayer. At the age of 29, while praying in the catacombs,

he felt the Holy Spirit enter his heart physically, enlarging it and exuding heat for the remainder of his life.

On fire with the love of God, he eventually accepted ordination to the priesthood and began a zealous ministry for souls. He made himself available for confession and spiritual direction for young people at all hours of the day and night, especially in the early days of their conversions.

He was known throughout Rome for his cheerfulness and humility. He was determined to teach the faithful how to engage in mental prayer. He and his brothers visited the sick in Rome's hospitals, looked after poor pilgrims and taught the faithful. He was anxious about his young people falling into sin and organised wholesome activities to help them avoid the occasions of sin.

"They can split wood on my back, as long as they don't sin."

St Philip Neri

He wasn't initially intending to found a community, but young men gathered around him who were inspired by his priestly life and wanted to share in it. The congregation he founded became known as the Oratory, and other oratories have been founded throughout the world since St Philip's time. The Oratory was introduced into the English-speaking world by St John Henry Newman in the Nineteenth Century.

We look forward to sharing more with you of the life of St Philip in the months ahead.

Where will the community live?

Eventually the Oratory community will reside at the St Joseph's presbytery. Initially we will reside at the St Roch's presbytery as we make necessary repairs and renovations to the St Joseph's presbytery.

How will this change pastoral ministry in our family of parishes?

Nothing will change in the short-term with regard to the two priests appointed as Parish Priest and Assistant Priest. Each of us will continue doing the work that we have been. The only short-term change will be that the two seminarians will be assisting more fully with the pastoral ministry of the priests, living an intentional life based on the charism of St Philip Neri.

What about Fr Tom?

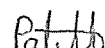
Fr Tom continues as Assistant Priest for our family of parishes, but will not be joining the Oratory community. He will continue to reside at St Mary's and the excellent relationship that exists between he and the Oratory community members will continue. Fr Tom has been very supportive of this development.

What about the parish staff and office?

There will be no change to the parish office arrangements or parish staffing as a result of the Oratory Project beginning.

We welcome questions and discussion about St Philip and the Oratory; and we ask for your prayers as we take this step to living in community.

God Bless,

  
Fr Michael Gallacher, Anthony Wright, Patrick Harris

St Philip Neri, pray for us.



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**PETER ANDREW COMENSOLI
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE**

**DECREE OF ESTABLISHMENT
MELBOURNE ORATORY PROJECT of ST PHILIP NERI**

PREAMBLE

Having prayerfully discerned, over several years, the proposal presented by Rev Michael Gallacher, Priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, together with Mr Anthony Wright and Mr Patrick Harris, seminarians of the same Archdiocese;

having received the favourable consultation of the appropriate diocesan offices and the support of the Procurator-General of the Confederation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Rome;

and desiring to encourage within our presbyterate a renewed witness of priestly fraternity, pastoral zeal, and joy in the spirit of St Philip Neri,

I now issue this decree, in accordance with the norms of canons 312 §1, 313, 301 §1, 305 §1, and other pertinent canons of the Code of Canon Law, for the establishment of an Oratory Project within the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

ARTICLE I – ESTABLISHMENT

§1. By this decree, I hereby establish the Melbourne Oratory Project of St Philip Neri (**The Melbourne Oratory Project**) within the territory of the family of parishes of *Malvern, Malvern East, and Glen Iris* as of 16 November 2025.

§2. **The Melbourne Oratory Project** is erected *ad experimentum* as the first stage in the canonical process that may, in time and with due discernment, lead to the erection of an Oratory-in-Formation and, *Deo volente*, a Congregation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri according to the norms of the Statutes of the Confederation of the Oratory of St Philip Neri.

ARTICLE II – NATURE AND PURPOSE

§1. **The Melbourne Oratory Project** is a community of secular priests and seminarians living together under the bond of charity and fraternity, without the profession of religious vows, in imitation of the life and spirit of St Philip Neri.

§2. The purpose of **The Melbourne Oratory Project** is:

- to cultivate priestly holiness through common life, prayer, and mutual support;
- to serve the pastoral mission of the Archdiocese, particularly within the family of parishes entrusted to its care;
- to offer a joyful and humble witness of evangelical charity in the local Church;
- to discern the call to the eventual foundation of an Oratory proper.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

§1. The initial members of **The Melbourne Oratory Project** are:

- Rev Michael Gallacher PP, Priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne;
Mr Anthony Wright, Seminarian of the Archdiocese of Melbourne;
Mr Patrick Harris, Seminarian of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

§2. Rev Michael Gallacher is hereby appointed Moderator of the Oratory Project, responsible for the internal life and community order, under my authority as Archbishop.

§3. Very Rev Andzrej Madry EV is appointed Mentor to **The Melbourne Oratory Project**, to assist the Moderator and to maintain liaison with the Archdiocese.

ARTICLE IV – CANONICAL STATUS

§1. **The Melbourne Oratory Project** does not constitute a public juridic person in the Church; its members remain individually incardinated in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, with their rights and obligations as clerics and seminarians intact (cf. can. 265 ff.).

§2. **The Melbourne Oratory Project** exists under the immediate authority of the Archbishop, who exercises vigilance according to can. 305 §1.

§3. All sacramental, pastoral, and administrative responsibilities within the Parishes of Malvern, Malvern East, and Glen Iris remain governed by the existing canonical appointments of the Priests concerned.

ARTICLE V – RESIDENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

§1. The community of **The Melbourne Oratory Project** shall initially reside at St Roch's Presbytery, Glen Iris, until such time as the St Joseph's Presbytery, Malvern, is suitably renovated for their permanent dwelling.

§2. The pastoral and liturgical life of the Parishes shall continue without interruption; collaboration between all clergy and parish staff is to be fostered in a spirit of fraternity and co-responsibility.

ARTICLE VI – REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

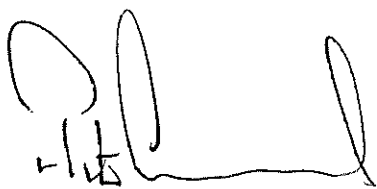
§1. **The Melbourne Oratory Project** shall be reviewed after three years, or sooner if circumstances require, in dialogue with the Procurator-General of the Confederation of the Oratory.

§2. Should the community demonstrate stability, spiritual fruitfulness, promising growth in vocations and its apostolate, to the satisfaction of the Confederation of the Oratory and the Archbishop, the establishment of an Oratory-in-Formation will be considered.

CONCLUSION

Invoking the intercession of St Philip Neri, the Apostle of Joy, I commend this new **Melbourne Oratory Project** to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and entrust it to the prayers of the clergy and faithful of the Archdiocese.

Issued at St Patrick's Centre, East Melbourne, on this **Seventh Day of November 2025**,



.....
Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne



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Notary

