CatholicDiocese
OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

DECREE OF THE DIOCESAN BISHOP

90/2025

Decree – Provision

Appointment to Ecclesiastical Office of Assistant Priest to the Parishes of Wallsend-Shortland and Sugarloaf - Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

Dear Father Christogonus Okoro,

I appoint you to the Parish of Parishes of Wallsend-Shortland and Sugarloaf as Assistant Priest (CIC cc. 545-552) assisting Fr Christian Onukwugha. Your appointment is from **02 January 2026** until I advise you otherwise in writing.

The obligations of an Assistant Priest (also called Parochial Vicar) are outlined in canons 545-552. You need to be familiar with these. Please especially take note of the requirement to assist the Parish Priest (c. 548 §2) and your reporting obligations to him (c. 548 §3). It is the Parish Priest who is responsible for the pastoral care of the parish and as canon 548 §1 states you are to follow the pastoral mandate given to you, by him. The focus of your ministry is to be the parishes of this appointment. Ministry outside these parishes should be rare and only undertaken with the permission of the Parish Priest.

The Assistant Priest cooperates with and is under the direction of the Parish Priest in helping to fulfil the duties of Parish Priest. I draw your attention to Chapter VI of the Latin Code of Canon law, especially canons 528-537, which deal with the responsibilities of a Parish Priest.

This appointment also grants you permission to exercise faculties obtained at ordination, faculties obtained by holding the ecclesiastical office of Pastor, and other diocesan faculties. These faculties are able to be exercised in the territory of the respective parishes.

Please make yourself aware of the Diocesan Particular Law and follow the directions in such laws with particular care. A copy of the faculties and a full list of diocesan particular law instructions can be found at this link: DoMN SharePoint - Particular Law. This site continues to be updated so please check it regularly.

The Bishop's Office will inform the following of your appointment (if relevant to do so) and make any necessary changes:

1. Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages

Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle 841 Hunter Street, Newcastle West 2302 I PO BOX 780 Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone 02 4979 1200 **Fax** 02 4979 1119 **ABN** 91 605 046 457 **Visit us online** www.mn.catholic.org.au

2. Legal and Governance *(ACNC Charity Register)*
3. The Official Directory of the Catholic Church of Australia
4. Catholic Community Fund *(CCF)*
5. Maitland Clergy Central Fund *(MCCF)*
6. Australian Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office/or Department of Home Affairs, if relevant
7. Clergy in Parish/es of Appointment, if relevant
8. Director Catholic Schools
9. Principals of local Parish Primary Schools and local Catholic High Schools
10. Director CatholicCare
11. Director St Nicholas Early Education, OOSH and Pathways
12. Pastoral Support Worker
13. Communications & Marketing *(Intranet / Website)*
14. People & Culture *(mnpeople)*
15. Technology Services
16. Information Management Team *(Padre).*

I wish to remind you of your obligation to celebrate the Latin Rite liturgies in accord with the Latin Rite liturgical texts for your parishioners. Extraneous customs or elements from other Rites or cultures serve only to create confusion in liturgy.

As you are aware, this appointment is not intended to create an employment relationship. The appointment and your acceptance of it is part of your religious and spiritual service to the Church, in this Diocese, in collaboration with myself.

You will need to take the **Oath of Office** and the **Profession of Faith** which you may do before any priest in good standing. The documents accompany this decree.

The Diocese is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It is a requirement that you comply with all civil and ecclesiastical laws and instructions in relation to safeguarding. To demonstrate this you are required to sign the **Diocesan Safeguarding Commitment Statement.** The document accompanies this decree.

I ask that you please send my office signed copies of:

- a Letter of Acceptance
- the Oath of Office and the Profession of Faith (CIC. 1283)
- the Diocesan Safeguarding Commitment Statement (NSW Child Safe Standards Std.1).

Our Diocese has developed an Ongoing Professional Development Process (The Process). To access the Ongoing Professional Development Process and resources please see the following link to the Diocesan Intranet documents: Professional Development Resources.

The Process includes professional supervision, ongoing formation, and 360 degree reviews aligned to the Parish Pastoral Plan. Your acceptance of this Office includes your commitment to participate in The Process. Recording of your completion of each element of the Continuous Professional Development Table is to be recorded in mnpeople.

A list of approved professional supervisors will be provided by the Bishop's Office at your request, and you are to register your sessions in mnpeople.

At the end of your term of office, your participation in The Process will be taken into account before another appointment is made.

The Maitland Clergy Central Fund *(MCCF)* oversees and is responsible for your sustentation and so I refer you to the Funds Statutes and Regulations (CIC c. 1274). Please make yourself aware of your rights and responsibilities by reading the attached copy of these statutes and regulations. Please contact the MCCF Chairperson if you have any enquiries.

Fr Christogonus, **I seek your written acceptance** of the appointment to this ecclesiastical office, and associated obligations, **within 14 days** of receiving this letter.

I wish you all the best in your ministry and assure you of my prayers.

Given at Hamilton, NSW on the 12th day of December 2025.

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SEAL DIOCESE MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

Very Reverend Matthew Muller VG
Chancellor

+MK/jw

enc: Documents: Oath of Office; Profession of Faith; Safeguarding Commitment Statement
cc: Clergy in Departing and Incoming Parish/es (List by Name and Position)
Bishop's Office - Pastoral Support – Nichola McCarthy
Bishop's Office - For People and Culture/MN People – Via Lodged Form

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