

Biography

Bishop David Louis Walker

Bishop David was ordained Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay on 3 September 1996, succeeding the Diocese's inaugural Bishop, the Most Rev Patrick Murphy.

Born on 13 November 1938, Bishop David was one of six children (one died in infancy) in a close-knit family, who spent their childhood in the eastern Sydney suburb of Clovelly. His early education was with the Sisters of St Joseph and with the Marist Brothers at Marcellin College, Randwick. He subsequently entered the Seminary, studying at Springwood and Manly. In 1960 he gained the Baccalaureate of Theology, graduating *magna cum laude*. He was ordained for the priesthood by Cardinal Gilroy on 21 July 1962 and in the same year obtained the Licentiate of Theology.

His priestly career began in the conventional pattern with service as assistant priest in Campsie and Granville. During this time, he was invited to return to Manly to study for the Doctorate of Divinity degree. Even then, his deep interest in spirituality led him to complete a thesis on the spiritual influences in the western tradition - focusing on the early spiritual writer, John Cassian. Again, (in 1966) he graduated *magna cum laude*.

In 1967, with this background, he was invited to teach in the Catholic Theological Faculty of Sydney, at Manly, lecturing to religious brothers and sisters in the Institutes of the Faculty, The Holy Spirit Institute (for religious brothers) and the Mater Dei Institute (for religious sisters) and to seminarians doing a basic degree in Theology. In 1969 he became Director of the Mater Dei Institute, leaving a year to study overseas.

As he came to realise the importance of reaching out to make serious theological study and reflection more available to the Catholic people, he developed the idea of writing out his lectures for people to study at home. In 1969, in conjunction with Fr Neil Brown and Fr Peter Neville, he was a founder of the Catholic Correspondence Centre, and in 1973 began to give evening courses at North Sydney. Teaching on spirituality was supplemented by writing, beginning in 1976 with an Introduction to the first Australian edition of *The Spiritual Life* by Evelyn Underhill, and Anglican spiritual writer and guide. Then in 1977, he published *God is a Sea: the Dynamics of Christian Living*, a simple introduction to some classic spiritual writers.

In the first six years of the Correspondence Centre about 6500 courses were sent out and about 16000 courses followed. This understanding and promotion of spirituality was extended when he

pursued more postgraduate study in the Scriptures in Rome and at the University of London King's College where, in 1972 was awarded the Master of Theology degree in New Testament (Distinction).

The following year he joined the staff of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Sydney, teaching Systemic Theology and later headed the pastoral studies department. He served for a time as secretary of the Catholic Theological Faculty of Sydney and as rector of the Post Graduate House for three years.

In the final term of 1973, he ran a pilot scheme for a program on reading the Spiritual Classics which led, with Sr Rosa Courney RSJ, and Fr John Ryan, to establishing the Christian Spirituality Throughout the Centuries program for priests, seminaries, laity and men and women religious.

It was this program that provided the momentum for leaving the Theological Faculty of Sydney in 1978 and founding the Centre for Christian Spirituality at Randwick, where face-to-face and distance courses in Christian spirituality were offered. The Centre found ready interest, with about 10,000 people taking courses from 1978 to 2001. He remained Director of the Educational Centre for Christian Spirituality until his appointment as Bishop.

Following the retirement in Broken Bay of the inaugural Bishop, Most Rev Patrick Murphy, David Walker was appointed his successor on 9 July 1996. He was ordained to the young Diocese of Broken Bay on 3 September at Our Lady of Dolours Catholic Church, Chatswood, by Cardinal Clancy. The ceremony was attended by 33 Bishops, 150 priests, and an overflowing congregation of more than 800 people.

During the past ten years, Bishop David has consolidated the Diocese of Broken Bay – extending organisations and pushing the Diocese into new fields. Amongst his initiatives have been the groupings of parishes into three Deaneries and the amalgamation of several Parishes to further extend the quality of pastoral care afforded to the people of the Diocese.

Ecumenical activity was given particular impetus with the establishment of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission in 1998. Strong relationships and dialogues have since been formed with the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

The establishment of The Broken Bay Institute, in 2003, is evidence of Bishop David's commitment to promoting a truly Australian spirituality, fostering theological and spiritual education.

In 2005, Bishop David travelled to Rome as the representative of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for the International Congress organised to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum".

In 2006, many of the ministries and agencies of the Diocese were brought under the one roof at the Caroline Chisholm Centre, Pennant Hills. This move has supported the vision for Broken Bay that promotes and models collaborative ministry as the best practice for sustaining, guiding and healing the members of this faith community and the community itself.

In the same year, Bishop David announced a new ministry for women that would be based on a deep and personal commitment to Jesus. The program, Ecclesial Women, will enable women to participate more fully in the life, and leadership, of the Diocese – supporting the Bishop in the pastoral care of the people. This program will commence in March 2008.

Bishop David brings to his appointment a continuing commitment to faith renewal and to be responsive to the changing needs of the Catholic Church in Australia. He is involved in the cause for the beatification of Eileen O'Connor, the co-founder of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor (the Brown Nurses).

He is a prominent speaker and has published extensively on faith renewal, spirituality, mysticism, formation of clergy and Church leadership.

He is a former member of the Ecumenical Commission of the Archdiocese of Sydney, the NSW Ecumenical Council, the Australian Catholic Theological Association, and the Committee for the Continuing Education of the Clergy. He was a board member of the Australasian Catholic Record and a former consultant to the National Council of Churches. He is a Permanent Committee Member of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; a member of the Bishops Commission for Education; and member of the Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation.

In 2006, as representative for the Bishops Committee for Education and as Chairperson of the Catholic Education Commission NSW, Bishop David officially launched a Statement from the Catholic Bishops of NSW and ACT on Catholic Education, *Catholic Schools: At a Crossroads*.