Message given by Fr Wayne at Weekend Masses on 14-15 November 2026

Dear Parishioners …

I love this place. I love this Parish. I love being part of the Donnybrook, Capel and Kirup communities. Having family history here, I also feel very connected and at home here. **I love all of you.** Since arriving here as your Parish Priest early last year, I have felt welcomed, loved, appreciated and supported.

All of this makes what I am about to share with you … very difficult to share.

Some of you know that I have a very complex medical history. As a young child, I had a brain tumour. While it was successfully removed via neurosurgery, it resulted in several life-long medical conditions, including a non-functioning pituitary gland, a non-functioning thyroid, and an impaired hypothalamus, causing anxiety and depression.

While these things have positively shaped me into who I am today, they have also meant that my life has been a struggle.

A mental health breakdown in 2010 and being the victim of a violent home invasion, assault and robbery in 2013 *(… 13 years ago today)* … have only compounded this struggle.

I love being a priest. I love the many graced opportunities it gives me to be part of people's lives, especially at some of the deepest and most meaningful times. There is something uniquely and profoundly special about being welcomed into people's lives and hearts at these times. It really is holy ground.

I also love the *everyday* things … the friendships, relationships and encounters that bless me and give me life – at school, around town, visiting homes and hospitals, catch-ups for a coffee and chat.

I love being a Parish Priest – but it also *exhausts* me. While I usually look well on the outside, my unique mix of physical and mental health conditions mean that – even with multiple medications and allied health supports – **I struggle**.

I struggle with physical and mental fatigue: with keeping up with the demands of ministry; with attending to anything beyond the immediate and urgent; with managing my health conditions; with adequately looking after myself.

***Parish* Priesthood** – with its combined responsibilities of pastoral care and parish administration; with its increasing complexity in our rapidly changing world; and with its 24-7 nature – where things happen at any time and often all at once – *has always been difficult for me*.

For most of my life and most of my almost 27 years of priestly ministry, I have been able to push through the struggles and just keep going. For the past few years, however, this has become much more difficult. It's been having an increasing impact on my mental and physical health as I get older – to the point where I have now realised that I need a change.

So it was that I wrote to Bishop George a couple of months ago, requesting that I be assigned to a new – more focused – area of ministry: one where my pastoral gifts and skills could still be put to good use; but with less of the 24-7 demands and responsibilities that come with being a Parish Priest.

Bishop George was very open to this, and so, a new Diocesan role is being created for me. The precise job description is still being finalised, but it will include some part-time Catholic high school Chaplaincy; working with Fr Tony in the area of adult faith formation; and working with Aaron Faure in the areas of Evangelisation and Youth Ministry. These are all areas that I have always been passionate about, so I am looking forward to embracing them in my new job.

I am also looking forward to having a more defined role, which will enable me to better attend to my long-term physical and mental health needs and hopefully ensure many more years of ministry to the people of our Diocese.

Unfortunately – of course – this means that from February next year, I will no longer be your Parish Priest.

I appreciate that this *will* be a disappointment for some of you. It ***will*** be sad to leave here, but for my long-term wellbeing, I know it's what I need to do.

Bishop George has assured me that Donnybrook Parish **will** be assigned a new Parish Priest. Who this will be is currently being finalised and will be announced soon.

I will miss this place, and I will miss all of you. Thankfully, though, I will be just up the road, and my new role will include opportunities for us to keep in touch. I will also be available to do weekend Parish Masses when Priests need a replacement, so I'm sure our paths will continue to cross.

Thank you for your constant love and support during my time here *(… which isn't over yet!)* … and for your understanding with this decision I have had to make.

May God bless you … and may God bless us all.

Fr Wayne.