I am delighted to announce the appointment of Father Paul West, who from mid-May this year, will work in a part-time capacity at the School. Father Paul will also take a significant role in the life of the Cathedral, replacing Father Mark Watson.

Paul was born in Sydney in August 1966. He is the son of the late parish priest and hospice chaplain, Father John Henry West. Paul has a proud Novocastrian heritage: his paternal grandfather, Arthur West, ran the family road contractor business, Armitage & West, that constructed and renewed many of the streets in Cooks Hill. Paul’s maternal grandfather, Sydney Holyhead, was at one time the publican of the George Hotel and the Star Hotel, in Newcastle.

Paul’s childhood was spent in Denman and his teenage years in Kurri Kurri.

Paul married Sally Martin from Murrurundi, at St James Church Morpeth, in 1988. They have two children: Jessica (20) a filmmaker, and Dylan (15) a keen rugby player.

Between 1994-2000, Paul and his young family lived with the Goomeroi aboriginal tribe in far northwestern New South Wales. He worked, initially, as the high school art teacher in the aboriginal community’s Boggabilla Central School. In 1995, he established, at this school, the Euraba Arts Festival: the first national arts festival exclusively for aboriginal teenagers mentored by nationally acclaimed aboriginal tutors in visual arts, drama, dance, writing, and music (Euraba is a Goomeroi word meaning place of healing).

In 1996, Paul was made a full-time lecturer in fine arts within the New England Institute of Technology. He was given a brief to consult and develop education programs in indigenous arts and to supervise them with aboriginal teachers and administrators in the Northwestern region of NSW.

In 2003, Paul worked as the acting head teacher of the Hunter Institute of Technology – Fine Arts Campus in Hunter Street Newcastle. During this time Paul attended the funeral of his mentor Bishop Leslie Stibbard, at Christ Church Cathedral Newcastle: during this service Paul sensed the call to priesthood.

From 2004–06, Paul read theology at Westcott House within Cambridge University. He was made a deacon in Little St. Mary’s Church Cambridge, and was priested the following year in the Diocese of Wangaratta. Father Paul was an assistant curate at St. Matthew’s Albury and St. John’s Dee Why. He was the assistant priest of St. James King Street in Sydney (2009-10).

For six years, Father Paul has been the parish priest of SS Peter and Paul, Wisbech, in the Diocese of Ely, in England. Father Paul has been chaplain to six successive Mayors of Wisbech; Elm Road Primary and Ramnoth Junior Schools; Wisbech Grammar School; the Port of Wisbech; and the Britain-Australia Society – Cambridge Branch.

Father Paul is very much looking forward to returning home to Australia and Newcastle. I was fortunate to spend time with Paul in early January and immediately appreciated his warmth, humour and genuine nature.