

Go out into the Deep:

Become the Church Christ calls us to be

Appendices to Synthesis: Final Draft

Contribution to the Synod for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,
from the Diocese of Parramatta



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA

Acknowledgement of Country:

"We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the unceded lands on which we walk, the lands of the Darug and Gundungurra Peoples. We pay our respects to them and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past, present and emerging. We recognise that they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of Indigenous Australia and the wisdom of Mother Earth, and we wish to learn from them as we journey forward."



Appendix 1 Background of the Diocese of Parramatta

Diocese of Parramatta

Committed to conversion and synodality

In July 2019, at the invitation of their bishop, around 250 members from across the Diocese of Parramatta gathered in conversation to listen, discern and envision the roadmap for the future of the Church in Western Sydney.

The themes of the Forum characterise the vision that the Church of Parramatta holds for itself: to bring about cultural change within so that we become a Church:

- ▷ that is listening, synodal and inclusive
- ▷ goes to the margins
- ▷ that is humble, healing and merciful.

“We need to create a church that is more humble, transparent, accountable to the faithful and even to the community at large,” concluded Bishop Vincent. “The time has come for the church to be truly the church of the baptised and together, with the ordained, all the people of God, all of us, can create that new culture that we long for – a culture of humility, accountability and service – which is at the heart of the Gospel. “May the Holy Spirit accompany us as we move boldly into the direction of the Kingdom. Let’s have the courage to launch ourselves into the deep.”

Territory

The Diocese lives on the land of the Darug and Gundungurra people.

The Diocese of Parramatta was created by Pope John Paul II on 8 April 1986 with a territory of 4,289 sq. km, reaching from Dundas Valley, west to Megalong Valley in the Blue Mountains, south to Luddenham, and north to Wiseman’s Ferry and beyond towards Lithgow. It is situated in the Western part of Sydney. Parramatta is now commonly regarded as Australia’s fourth largest CBD (central business district) and the second urban ‘hub’ in Australia’s premier city.

With more than 320,000 Catholics, the Diocese comprises forty-six parishes managed by their respective Parish Priests/Pastoral Director/Administrators. The newest parish is an intentional Catholic community led by a Deacon and his wife.

About a third of the parishes in the diocese have fewer than 4,000 Catholics; about a third have 4,000 to 8,000 Catholics; and about a third have over 8,000 Catholics. The average size of parishes is already very high by Australian standards. In 2016 the typical weekend attendance at Mass was 47,005 (14.6%).

The Diocesan Head Office is located at 470 Church Street North Parramatta NSW 2150.

Population

Continuing growth in the Diocese is driven by two factors: as the cheapest area in which to live in Australia’s biggest city, it tends to attract large numbers of younger families with children; for the same reason it attracts large numbers of recent immigrants to Australia. In the most recently published Australian Census (2016), approximately 323,000 people nominated as Catholic in the area designated as the Diocese of Parramatta. This was around 28% of the total population of the region. Whilst the majority of the Catholic population in the diocese was born in Australia (62%), the top five birthplaces of Catholics born overseas (32%) are the Philippines, Lebanon, Malta, India and the United Kingdom. The highest proportions of recent arrivals are from Iraq, the Middle East, Columbia, India and Brazil. From 2001, many South Sudanese migrated to Australia, settling in Western Sydney. The diocese is very culturally and linguistically diverse.

A significant number (4,623) are Indigenous Australians: the Diocese of Parramatta has the largest national urban concentration of Indigenous Catholics.

The response to this diversity is reflected in the many ministries and chaplaincies provided by the Diocese.

The diocese is home to people of many different faith positions and none. 20.6% of the Greater Western Sydney population identified with religions other than Christian in 2016. Islam (9.1%), Hindu (4.9%) and Buddhism (4.8%) are the majority non-Christian religions. The Catholic population in the diocese increased by about 13% from 1996 to 2011, and declined by less than 3% in 2016. The most recent Mass Attendance figures indicated 14.6% of Catholics attended Mass during the four week survey period.

Education

Catholic education is the jewel in the crown of the Mission of the Catholic Church in Australia and, in Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta, 80 schools welcome families into a learning community. Total enrolment in Diocese of Parramatta schools is around 43,000 students. The diocese also operates four Catholic Early Learning Centres (pre-schools) and 41 Catholic Out of School Hours Care services. Our schools engage with the world rather than withdraw into enclaves. Our desire to be countercultural is nothing more than Jesus' radical vision of love and human flourishing that guides the way we educate our students.

Campion College is a Catholic Institution for Higher Learning which offers a liberal arts education for its students and the Australian Catholic University (ACU) has recently opened the St Josephine Bakhita Campus in Blacktown. St Bakhita is the Patron Saint of the Sudan and South Sudan and for the victims of Modern Slavery. Secular universities also have a strong presence within the Diocese.

Synodality

Inspired by Pope Francis's calls for inclusion for all the baptised, Bishop Vincent has overseen changes to the governance of the diocese in his first four years as bishop. He wants to lead in a collegial and synodal way, and to create a culture of collaboration and participation in which the gifts of all the baptised - not just the ordained - are brought to bear on the life of the church. One clear step in moving towards more synodal structures in the Diocese has been the establishment of a Diocesan Pastoral Council and the innovation of six Deanery Pastoral Councils. While in their early days, these advisory councils enact a commitment to the Diocese becoming a more inclusive, listening Church that has its ear close to the pastoral needs of all people and that seeks out the wisdom of all the People of God.

Challenges ahead

The Church in Parramatta has many strengths and opportunities for greater reach and continued growth in holiness and there is every cause to be optimistic about the future of this young diocese. There are still many challenges ahead for the Church in Parramatta which will only be addressed successfully in a synodal Church.

"The Holy Spirit speaks through the signs of the times and we must discern and learn to listen to God's voice in our culture. In the same way, we must apply a critical lens to the institutional structures and practices that have been part of the monarchical, imperial and patriarchal past and have been entrenched in the Church... The origins of Christianity had an amazingly egalitarian structure - for example, the word 'ecclesia' in Greek entails the concept of a democratic assembly of free citizens. We've lost much of this concept... So, an ecclesiology 'from below', that is the theology of the Church rooted in the People of God, has been a much older tradition than an ecclesiology 'from above'."

A more detailed description of the Diocese can be found here in [LINKED DOCUMENT A](#)

Appendix 2 Fourth Bishop of Parramatta

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL

Bishop Vincent Long was born in 1961 in Dong Nai in Vietnam. Since the fall of Saigon in 1975, his family has been dispersed: his mother, a brother and a sister are in Melbourne, three brothers are in Holland, a sister remains in Vietnam, and Bishop Vincent is now in Parramatta.

In 1984, he became a professed Conventual Franciscan friar (OFM Conv) and studied for the priesthood in Melbourne.

After his priestly ordination on 30 December in 1989, he was sent to Rome for further studies and was awarded a licentiate in Christology and Spirituality from the Pontifical Faculty of St Bonaventure.

He served as an assistant and then parish priest for seven years in Kellyville within the Diocese of Parramatta and for seven years in Springvale in Victoria before being elected Superior of the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals in Australia in 2005. He served as Assistant General in Rome from 2008 until 2011, responsible for the Asia-Oceania section of his Order.

In 2011, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne in which role he served for nearly five years. Bishop Vincent is the first Vietnamese born bishop to lead a diocese outside of Vietnam and the first Vietnamese born bishop in Australia.

During that period, he was Episcopal Vicar for Justice and Peace and for Social Services and was Chair of the Catholic Education Commission (Victoria).

Nationally, Bishop Vincent is the Chair, Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

On 5 May 2016, he was appointed the fourth Bishop of Parramatta in succession to Bishop Anthony Fisher OP following his appointment as Archbishop of Sydney in 2014.

On 16 June 2016, Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv was installed as the fourth Bishop of Parramatta at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta.

Bishop Vincent's motto is *Duc in Altum*, 'Go out into the deep'. In the Diocese of Parramatta Bishop Vincent has encouraged the people of God to "go out into the deep", reaching out to those on the margins of both Church and society.

Bishop Vincent established Diocesan and Deanery Pastoral Councils in 2017 for the purpose of listening and providing fellowship and formation to representatives of all parishes.

His leadership has resulted in a Diocesan Governance Review now in implementation phase, and Statement on the Parramatta Way of Safeguarding both published in 2021.

Appendix 3 Consultation Strategy and Method

Education, outreach, listening, synthesising, sharing

The following steps were taken in the consultation for The Synod of Bishops 2021-2023 in the Diocese of Parramatta. A detailed description of the method can be found in the [LINKED DOCUMENT B](#)

Our Journey to Synod 2021-2023 was launched in October 2021 during Mass celebrated by Bishop Vincent Van Nguyen Long in a suburban parish in Western Sydney.

A small committee was appointed to promote the Synod and organise the consultation : senior diocesan leaders, clergy and volunteers, lay and religious and ordained, male and female, cradle Catholics and converts, people with long Australian history, and new arrivals from Europe and Asia. This team later appointed a Writing Group of four people aged from mid 20s to mid 70s, male and female,

with backgrounds in Catholic education, writing, management consulting, engineering and wildlife management.

A series of educational webinars was produced and promoted as an educational resource and stimulus for conversation. A dedicated webpage was added to the diocesan website to hold resources from the Diocese, ACBC and the Vatican, and give information about synodality, related events and how to spread the word. Diocesan social media shared this information on a regular basis. This webpage also exhibited the draft synthesis and will hold the final version and appendices permanently <https://parracatholic.org/synod-of-bishops/>

Personal invitations to participate were sent to diverse groups, agencies, ministries and individuals. Direct emails were also sent to large mailing lists held by the Diocese's Mission Enhancement Team. A postcard was produced for parishes to welcome people back to church after the latest lockdown, and encourage them to take part in the Synod consultation. The Consultation period opened in November 2021 and extended into March 2022. Pandemic related lockdowns, Christmas and long summer holidays made it difficult to reach and hear from all groups who were invited, however many persevered and a total of 114 submissions were received from over 650 people.

The People discerned the Spirit through a few different approaches: most used Spiritual Conversation process found in the Synod guidelines. Some considered alternative questions concerning the relevance of the Church or what the church means to the individual. Conversations were held in large and small organised groups, who sent their responses either directly to the Committee or through the ACBC portal. Many individuals also made submissions.

Writing Group followed the recommended methods described in the Preparatory Document and Vademecum to read, encounter and re-read both submissions and relevant resources, discerning highlights and obstacles in the experiences recounted in the submissions, and collaborating with the Bishop and the Contact Persons in order to prepare the synthesis.

The Exhibition Draft was presented to the Council of Priests with a brief discussion and opportunity for feedback and at the same time was exhibited online for a week after Easter. Feedback from both these methods was collected and incorporated appropriately. Most feedback was positive and held constructive suggestions, some of which were incorporated into the final document.

The Final Synthesis became the Contribution of the Diocese to the Synod when ceremonially presented, along with the two volumes of submissions, on behalf of the people of Parramatta before a Mass in a local church presided by the Bishop on Sunday May 1. The volume of submissions sent direct to the diocese, including feedback on the Draft Synthesis, can be found in [LINKED DOCUMENT C](#), while the submissions sent through the ACBC website are in [LINKED DOCUMENT D](#).