

"Behold I am doing a new thing"

Isaiah 43:19

DIOCESE OF
PARRAMATTA

SYNOD

WORKING DOCUMENT

Becoming a more synodal Church
in the Diocese of Parramatta

OCTOBER 2023

SYNOD PRAYER

O God, who always walks with us
on the journey of life, we call upon you
to lead us forth united.

Bless and guide our Diocesan Synod.

Keep us anchored in your love.

Open our hearts as we listen and discern.

Reveal to us the way we are called
to go out into the deep.

Give us the courage to pursue
the mission with bold humility.

May we experience renewal in our local Church today,
and for generations to come.

We ask this prayer through Jesus Christ,
who in the power of the Holy Spirit continues to guide your Church,
to the fullness of your Kingdom now, and forever.

Amen.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

WELCOME

Dear friends in Christ,

Not long after my Installation as your pastor, I desired to hold a Diocesan Synod in order to develop a pastoral plan that would build on my predecessor's "Faith in Our Future" and chart a new pathway for the Diocese. However, we had to wait for the long-delayed National Plenary Council to conclude.

Finally, earlier this year, I formally convoked the first-ever Synod for the Diocese of Parramatta. To witness the process so far has been a privilege. The response has been truly remarkable. Many attended the Deanery Listening Sessions. Others shared their thoughts through informal gatherings and online submissions. The sheer number of stories and experiences where people spoke candidly of their concerns, anxieties, fears as well as their hopes and dreams has been a deep learning and a blessing. I value each and every person's input and pray that together we can find unity in diversity, articulate a common vision and chart a shared pathway forward.

Pope Francis has invited all Catholics to set out on a journey, to "walk together," as he puts it, and to reflect the true nature of the Church as a People of God. The Church is challenged to broaden its horizons and enlarge

the space of its tent. We cannot have a better future if we are not responsive to the call of the Spirit to go out into the deep and step into a new future beyond the safety, familiarity and security that we have known.

The diocesan journey of synodality is the source of renewal for us. The time has come for us to take seriously our baptismal mission, agency and discipleship. The Church, as the whole People of God, should walk together, sharing the burdens of humanity, listening to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth, bringing about the Kingdom vision of Jesus. This is the path of synodality or togetherness rooted in the awareness of the web of integral relationships, which according to the Pope is what God expects of the Church in the third millennium.

Over the coming days, I encourage you to participate wholly in prayer, listening and discernment guided by the Holy Spirit, as together we seek to witness to the Gospel and foster a more welcoming, compassionate, and humble Church.

Let us plough the fields for the seeds of the synodal Church to grow and bear fruit. Let us pray that we may grow through chaos and uncertainty in order to be more aligned with God's purpose. May the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to be our advocate guide us on the journey to truth, life and wholeness. May the gifts given us be unleashed from within and find new expressions for the building up of Christ's body and transformation of the world.



MOST REVEREND VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN OFM CONV
Bishop of Parramatta





OVERVIEW OF THIS WORKING DOCUMENT

This working document is the guide for Members at our first-ever Synod in the Diocese of Parramatta.

It includes:

- An overview of synodality
- An overview of our Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains
- An overview of synodality in the Diocese of Parramatta
- The journey to our first Synod
- Observations and reflections from the Synod Writing Group
- A framework for discernment
- The six themes and proposed resolutions to pray, discuss, discern, and vote on

SYNODALITY

In 2015, two years after his election, Pope Francis strongly urged the whole Catholic Church towards a process of renewal and conversion. In doing this, he was following a tradition of Church leaders through time, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles through to today.

Pope Francis calls all baptised persons as members of the People of God to:

- be prayerful and humble
- reflect together in community
- be open to, and guided by, the Holy Spirit in synodality
- to discern the mission of the Church in our world at this time.

“We must continue along this path. The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”

(Address by Pope Francis on the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Synod of Bishops, October 2015)

Synodality is not about changing the Church’s doctrine or tradition. As one submission stated: “synodality relies on tradition, tradition relies on synodality, and both depend on history to chart ever new paths forward to ensure we are living authentically in the spirit of Jesus Christ as Church today in response to our unique circumstances.”

Our unique circumstance is the Holy Spirit speaking through us as the local Church of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains in unity with Bishop Vincent, at this point in history.

We embark on this journey mindful of the reality that individual expressions of faith embedded in much of Catholic culture will be in tension with what synodality tries to accomplish. In one way or another, many submissions were searching, as our Diocesan Synod itself is searching, for answers to the question, what does our faith mean in contemporary society?

CATHOLICS IN THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

The Diocese of Parramatta was established in 1986 and is the newest, and one of the most multicultural and diverse dioceses in Australia. The Diocese of Parramatta rests on Darug and Gundungurra country and extends across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

A snapshot of our Diocese according to the 2021 Census data:

- We are in the top three dioceses with the highest proportion of Catholics in Australia – we have 322,448 Catholics, representing 24.7% of the population.
- We have five additional practicing Catholic rites: Maronite, Melkite, Ukrainian, Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Catholics.
- We have one of the youngest Catholic populations, with the median age being 39 years old. The national Catholic average is 43 years old.
- 105,978 Catholics are born overseas and 22% of Catholics speak a language other than English at home.
- There are 116,083 Catholic families.
- Catholics represent the largest religious group, but not by much. The next largest group is those who have stated “No Religion”, followed by “non-Christians” and then “Other Christians”.
- There are 19,998 Catholics living with a disability who require assistance with core activities.
- There are 7,251 people who have stated they are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- The top five birthplaces of Catholics born overseas are the Philippines, Lebanon, India, Malta, and Italy.
- The top five birthplaces with the highest proportions of recent arrivals are Brazil, Colombia, India, Middle East, and “other countries”.
- 21,585 Catholics live alone.
- The Diocese is home to one of the largest populations of refugees and asylum seekers. Blacktown, Parramatta & Cumberland Local Government Areas (LGAs) are among the top 5 NSW

LGAs in the Diocese where people who have arrived in Australia on Refugee or Humanitarian Visas, as well as people in the process of seeking asylum, live.

- The Diocese has a wide range of socioeconomic circumstances, ranging from some of the poorest in Australia to areas of considerable wealth.

PROCESS OF SYNODALITY TO DATE

Although it’s our first Synod, the Diocese has engaged in many local, national, and international gatherings, consultations, and processes in the spirit of synodality in recent years.

These include:

- **2012 – 2013:** Diocesan-wide consultations which led to the development of Pastoral Plan, *Faith in Our Future* 2014 – 2018.
- **2019:** Diocesan forum – *Go Out into the Deep*.
- **2018 – 2021:** Consultations in preparation for the Plenary Council at the invitation of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference resulting in Decrees published in 2022 (pending approval from the Vatican.)
- **2021 – 2023:** Consultations in preparation for the Synod of Bishops on Synodality to which Pope Francis invited us to continue ‘walking together’ at a universal level. A synthesis of Diocesan submissions was published in 2022.
- **2023:** The Synod of Bishops on Synodality will be held in Rome.

THE JOURNEY OF OUR FIRST DIOCESAN SYNOD

Since the Convocation of the Synod by Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv on the 5th March 2023, the Diocese of Parramatta has engaged in a process of listening, dialogue and discernment to learn and understand the path to becoming a more synodal church.

The fundamental question that guided the process was:

In what ways can we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to be a more synodal Church in the Diocese of Parramatta?

Additional questions were provided as a catalyst for discussion about the life and mission of the local church. These included:

COMMUNION

- What are the factors that make a great community? What brings people together?
- How can the church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains deepen communion, and still honour the rich diversity of our community?
- How do you try to accompany or ‘walk with’ family and friends through their struggles and joys?

PARTICIPATION

- What are the challenges or pressures that stop you from being more engaged in your local faith community?
- How can we encourage greater participation in the life of the Church at both a local and Diocesan level?
- How does your community effectively identify and share the gifts of its people?

MISSION

- What do you believe the mission of the Church is in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains?
- How do we ensure the ongoing nourishment of our faith communities, while expanding the tent for others to be included?
- Describe your local community and the needs you perceive.
- What are the ways in which we can meet the needs of today and into the future? Provide one practical suggestion on how we could meet that need.

OUR SYNOD PROCESS

In recognition of the composition and diversity of our Diocese, there was a deliberate and intentional method to hear as many voices as possible.

Targeted outreach was conducted to hear from people whose voices hadn't been heard in previous consultations.

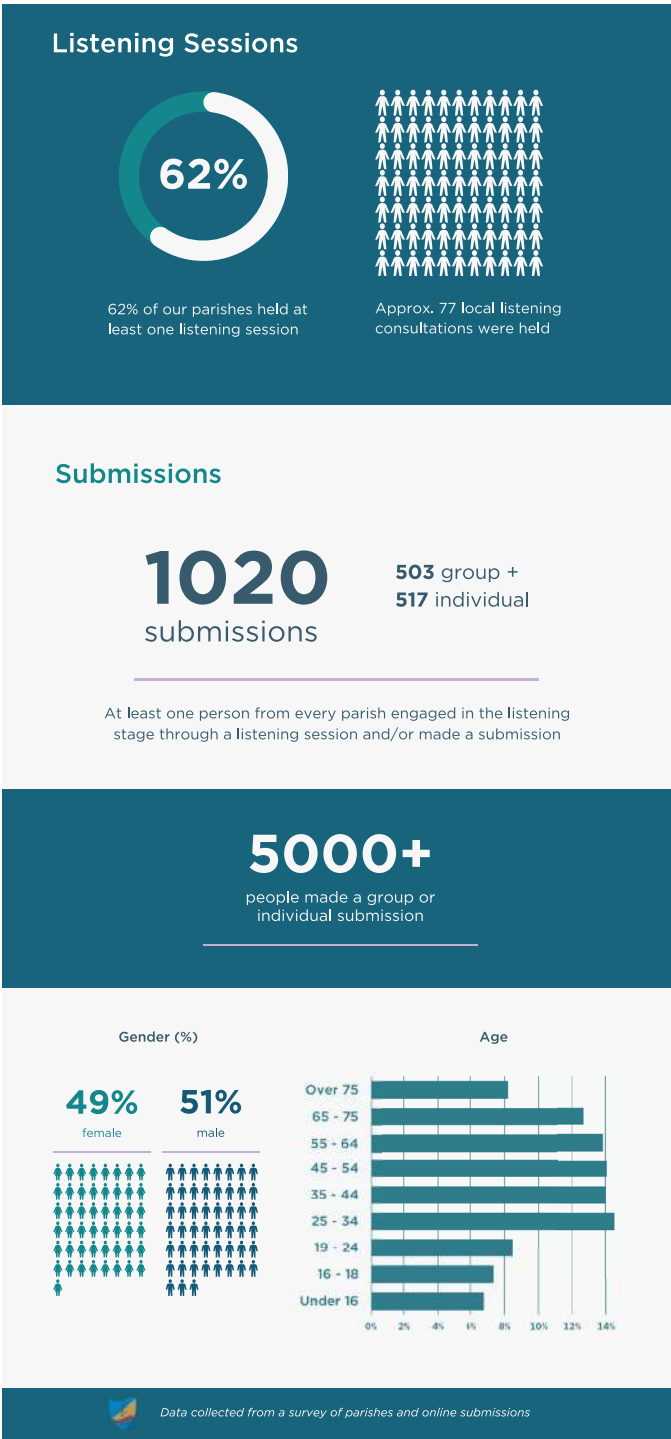
The process included:

- Three months of focused listening and dialogue sessions from May to July.
- Five deanery listening and dialogue sessions.
- Several meetings with clergy, chaplains, religious, deacons, and deacons' wives.
- 47 local listening and dialogue sessions across parishes and the parochial district of Marsden Park. At least one person from every parish engaged in the listening stage.
- Targeted outreach to school students, families of all structures, families from our daycare centres, young people (16-35), engaged couples, interfaith and ecumenical groups, and all Catholic rites.
- Submissions from all Diocesan ministries and agencies, including Catholic Care, Catholic Schools, Community Ventures, and more.
- Submissions from all leaders across the Diocese, as well as employees and volunteers.
- Submissions representing the diversity of our diocese including First Nations People, the poor, homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, LGBTIQA+ peoples, those with disabilities, the elderly, and those who spoke in advocacy for creation.
- Hundreds of individual and group submissions that were grassroots responses beyond any formal processes hosted by the Diocese.

An estimated 5000+ individuals engaged during the listening process.

Through a combination of analysis, discernment, and prayer, these submissions were summarised into key themes presented in this Working Document. These

themes summarise the joys, challenges, and hopes of the people in the Diocese of Parramatta. They are offered to each Member of the Diocesan Synod, so that they may be further discerned and discussed, leading to decided actions and a new pastoral plan that can concretely respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to be a more synodal Church in the Diocese of Parramatta.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE SYNOD WRITING GROUP

The Synod Writing Group read each submission several times and reflected prayerfully upon them.

Their observations were that there are:

- A wealth of voices whose sheer number spoke something positive and hopeful about a church moving towards greater synodality.
- Voices who rejoiced in being people of faith and in being welcomed into the listening and discernment process.
- Voices of discomfort with “synodality” and wariness of change.
- Voices of generosity and graciousness in going forward together as church in the Diocese.
- Voices of pain, isolation, sadness, and a sense of being alienated.
- Voices expressing a richness of experiences and providing practical advice.
- Voices of concern and anxiety about faith, the church, and the future, especially concerning youth.
- Multicultural voices longing for cultural liturgical and community celebrations.
- Voices speaking from deep faith and piety and asking for faith formation.
- Voices speaking about shared mission, and many others expressing a highly individualised approach to faith, prayer, and church.

Their reflections:

- People welcomed the opportunity to reflect together on this “new thing”, a new way to be church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.
- Submissions evidenced enthusiasm, seriousness, reflectiveness, and an openness to listen to other voices.
- Some submissions expressed disappointment in how we live as a diocesan church, naming challenges and obstacles that present themselves to people of faith in our contemporary society.

- A very small number of submissions expressed a doubt that their voices would be heard during the Synod process or that the Synod would result in any action.
- Submissions named uncertainties about how to move forward and what the solutions might be.
- The sense of “mission” and “community” were particularly strong, although understood in various ways.
- While there was a range of familiarity with the word, the submissions affirmed “synodality” for its fidelity to the mission and message of Jesus. It was understood as being grounded in prayer, humble listening, and trust in God’s faithfulness and parrhesia - the courage to speak

It was very clear from the submissions that when we gather in October, there will be tensions between the contributions different Members will bring. Members should not be surprised by this but see it as part of the work of the Spirit stirring up the waters of our diversity, to lead us towards harmonious resolution. As one submission wrote:

“What I heard was the tension of synodality: on the one hand, to become trapped in conflict and polarisation; on the other, to ignore the tensions that diversity brings, pretending they do not exist in a kind of fragmented coexistence. I’m hearing the Spirit calling us toward ‘generative tension’ to create that bigger-tent church more capable of holding together diversity and disagreement.” (#0031, Male, 25-34)

FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING DURING THE SYNOD

Respectful listening is at the heart of synodality, and when we open ourselves to each other with such respectful and humble listening we will encounter each other under the guidance of the Spirit.

» “[We need to] bring together in respectful conversation and dialogue those who are very different in the way they see things, rather than acquiescing in any thinking that there are those who are conservative and those who are progressive and each ‘camp’ looks on each other and refers to each other in less than positive terms - because God wants to speak to us through all people no matter who they are.”
(#0065, Male, 65-70)

» “Prayer is integral to the first pillar of Synodality, all flowing from the heart of Jesus’ prayer, ‘Father may they be one.’ Therefore, the movement of prayer is about becoming One in Christ, One with the other and One with the earth.” (Member of Consecrated Life community)

What united all submissions was a strong and consistent desire to live more faithfully, and actively as individual followers of Jesus Christ and as members of his Church. While submissions named different understandings of what that renewal might look like, the longing for renewal in our personal discipleship and relationship with God through Jesus shone through in all 1020+ submissions.

In our discussion, prayerful deliberations, and voting during the Synod, we will be guided by the principles taken from Instrumentum Laboris – XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops:

Inspired by the Holy Spirit...

1. A synodal Church is a listening Church.
2. A synodal Church that listens, is alert to the signs of the times, desires to be humble, and knows that it must ask forgiveness and has much to learn.
3. In a synodal Church all the faithful in the diocese are called through baptism to be co-responsible disciples.
4. A synodal Church is called to practise the culture of encounter and dialogue with the believers of other religions and with the cultures and societies in which it is embedded, but above all among the many differences that run through the Church itself.
5. A synodal church is lived out in a variety of contexts and cultures and is open, welcoming, and embraces all.
6. A synodal Church imitates Christ by the way he lived out the relationship between love and truth.
7. A synodal Church manages tensions without being crushed by them, experiencing them as a drive to deepen how communion, mission, and participation are lived and understood.
8. Walking together as pilgrim people of God brings us into contact with the healthy restlessness of incompleteness, as we are faced with the inexhaustible and holy mystery of God and an openness to surprise.
9. The questions that the synodal process brings to light require listening and attention as the first step, without rushing to offer immediate solutions.

In our liturgy and worship, we celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ, the communion we share through that faith and the mission we have from him to our whole world. Liturgy is the real place of unity for us as Catholics. Communion and mission flow into and out of our liturgical experience, and it is here that we share in God’s experience and initiative. The liturgy is the unifier and holds all things together. In this time of moving towards greater synodality, we will find unity when we gather for the Eucharist and other liturgies during the Synod.

THE SYNOD THEMES

Our Diocese responded generously to the invitation to discern ways to revitalise our Church and discover together a path of renewal. Hopes, disappointments, fears, and dreams were shared in their submissions.

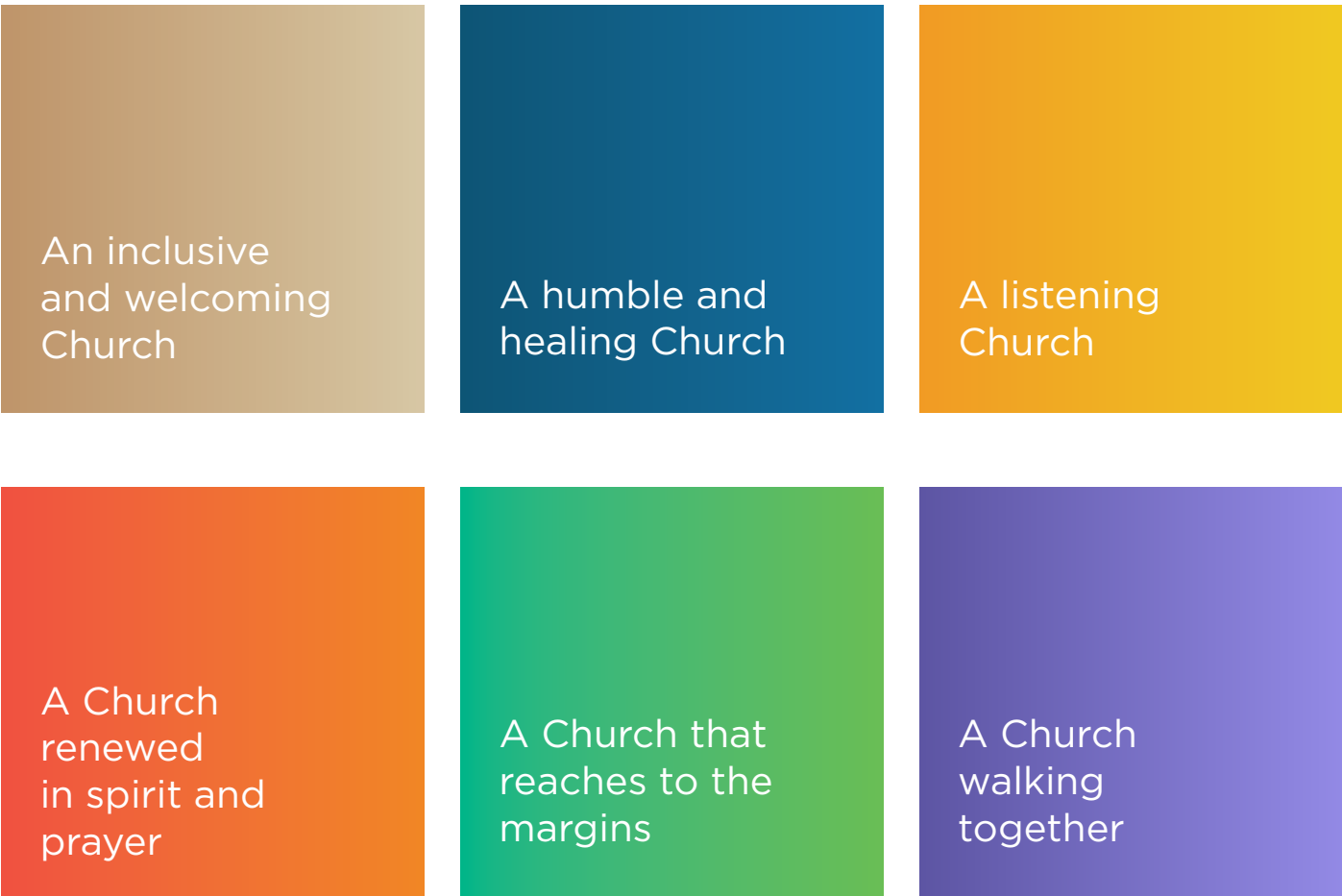
The many themes coming through these submissions cannot be separated from each other completely they are all an integral part of our faith and community life lived in mission.

The Synod Writing Group synthesised submissions under the following six themes:

- 1. **An inclusive and welcoming Church**
- 2. **A humble and healing Church**
- 3. **A listening Church**
- 4. **A Church renewed in spirit and prayer**
- 5. **A Church that reaches to the margins**
- 6. **A Church walking together**

Each theme includes:

- An introductory quote that sets the tone for the theme
- A summary of the submissions
- Questions for prayerful deliberation
- Proposed resolutions for deliberation and voting on.



“The Eucharist as Christ’s memorial effects the bond between Christ and his Body, the Church community. Through the Eucharist, the loving mercy of God becomes the perennial mission of the Church. From this point of view, synodality is constitutive for the Church’s way of living and acting.”
(Priest)



THEME 1

AN INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING CHURCH

REFLECTION

“In the Church, no one is left out or left over. There is room for everyone. Just the way we are. Everyone. Jesus says this clearly. When he sends the apostles to invite people to the banquet which a man had prepared, he tells them: ‘Go out and bring in everyone’, young and old, healthy and infirm, righteous and sinners. Everyone, everyone, everyone! In the Church there is room for everyone.

‘Father, but I am a wretch, is there room for me?’ There is room for everyone! All together now, everyone, repeat with me in your own language: Everyone, everyone, everyone. I can’t hear you: again! Everyone. Everyone. Everyone. That is the Church, the Mother of all. There is room for everyone. The Lord does not point a finger, but opens his arms. It is odd: the Lord does not know how to do this (pointing), but that (opening wide).

He embraces us all. He shows us Jesus on the cross, who opened his arms wide in order to be crucified and die for us.”

(Pope Francis, Welcoming Ceremony, World Youth Day, Portugal, August 2023. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/august/documents/20230803-portogallo-cerimonia-accoglienza.html>)

“There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship. Friendship is the source of the greatest pleasures, and without friends even the most agreeable pursuits become tedious.”

(St Thomas Aquinas)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

FAMILIES

Our Church teaches that families are the “domestic church”, the “cradle of life and love” and central to all social life. However, many submissions noted that family structures are changing and there is a need to pastorally support all families, and ensure they are welcomed and included into our Church with compassion, understanding, and love.

Many voices noted that the traditional and somewhat ‘idealised’ nuclear family of a married mother, father, and children no longer reflects the lived reality of family life in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. There was a view that the Church needs to better understand the specific pastoral needs of families in all its diversity, including those who are separated, divorced, living alone, raising children alone, blended families, those living in difficult marriages, those affected by disability, mental health, caring responsibilities, and multi- generational households. There were suggestions for the Church to better accompany families in all their diversity and complexity. There were suggestions for family ministers in schools and parishes to support the pastoral care and wellbeing needs of families in all their diversity.

Many submissions also spoke of the cost-of-living crisis, and the growing demands for people to work long hours, late hours, or on weekends to make ends meet. These voices reported feeling exhausted, time-poor, and overwhelmed, with a sense there is little time to intentionally connect with faith and community life.

OTHER VOICES

There were many submissions from people who felt alienated or not welcomed by our Catholic community. Some voices said they felt abandoned during a time of pastoral need, or had experienced judgemental attitudes in Church settings which had driven them away.

There were submissions from some of our First Nations People. An Indigenous male spoke about how while the Church provided him with material support, he was treated with suspicion and no one from the Church knew his name. There were many others who described feeling left out of parish life.

BEING INTENTIONALLY WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE TO THOSE WHO FEEL DISCONNECTED OR ALIENATED FROM FAITH

There was a strong awareness of the need for the Church to be more intentionally welcoming and inclusive, especially in reaching out and including those who may feel disengaged, disconnected, or disillusioned with the Church. In response, submissions identified the importance of designing new ministries, events, and safe spaces where people can engage with our faith communities and especially our parishes, in a way that is welcoming and non-judgemental. It was noted that an invitation to Sunday Mass might not be the most appropriate first entry point to engage people who are not initiated into the faith or who do not identify as being in communion with the Church.

Submissions called for the Church to prioritise reaching out and welcoming in those who no longer practise their faith or those who only engage with Church at Christmas, Easter or special events connected to life stages (e.g baptism, first communion, wedding).

THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTIQA+

There were a number of submissions from people who identify as LGBTIQA+ and their families who spoke of experiences of persecution, violence, prejudice, abuse, and exclusion both in and outside the Church. Many spoke of the pain as feeling like a problem to be solved rather than a person to be loved and invited to journey together with. Some suggestions to improve the welcome and inclusion of people who identify as LGBTIQA+ within our Church included:

- having dedicated support groups for them and their families

- to offer an inclusive welcome address at the start of Mass affirming that all are welcome regardless of their circumstances and
- creating spaces where people can be honest about their same-sex attraction or diverse gender expression and be provided accompaniment and pastoral care.

Other voices in the submissions named a concern that gestures to welcome, accompany and include the LGBTIQA+ community needed to be balanced with a need for the Church to remain honest to its teachings about sexuality and chastity, and the call for ongoing repentance and conversion.

A DESIRE FOR MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY

A very large number of submissions were from people connected to parishes, who called for our Church, and especially our parishes to provide more opportunities for people to experience meaningful community. There was some lament over an individualistic, “fast Mass” culture where most of the congregation don’t know each other and just attend Sunday Mass and go home. Many expressed a desire to have deeper and more authentic relationships with those in their parish, and for the parish to be more like a “family”.

Facilitating a sense of community and belonging in our parishes, where people could be known, loved, and supported as they share life and grow in faith together was a common hope and dream.

IDEAS FOR BUILDING WELCOME, INCLUSION, AND COMMUNITY

Many submissions provided comprehensive and practical ideas on how parishes could better build a sense of welcome, inclusion, and community. Some of these ideas included wearing name badges and calling each other by name, having an organised hospitality team to greet and welcome people at Mass, providing opportunities to meet and socialise after Mass, hosting parish open days, BBQs, sports days, and camps. The breadth of ideas provided during the listening process goes beyond what can be captured in this brief synthesis but it is proposed that after this Synod, these ideas could be collated into a resource to be used by parishes.

BUILDING WELCOME, INCLUSION, AND COMMUNITY VIA SMALL GROUPS

A large number of submissions identified the importance of building welcome, inclusion, and community within parishes by providing a framework for people to connect via small groups. Many submissions provided a personal testimony of the practical benefits of small groups in accompanying people and providing pastoral care, fellowship, and practical support to people when they most need it. There were specific suggestions around the Diocese promoting Passionist-style family groups or helping to train people to form basic ecclesial communities.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND SHARING OF GIFTS

Some submissions highlighted the importance of building community by helping people to discover their gifts and talents and then inviting them to use these for ministry and for the common good. There was some consensus around the link between participation and community. It is understood that people are more likely to feel as if they belong to a community when they can use their gifts and talents to serve and contribute to their community in a practical and meaningful way.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH A CONNECTION TO CULTURE

Another way to build community was by ensuring that our liturgy, prayer and other activities and events are authentic expressions of our diverse multicultural communities. Some submissions suggested that the Diocese could help parishes promote and celebrate important feast and cultural days that were relevant to the diversity of its local communities. Others asked for the Diocese to promote multicultural Masses and inter-rite celebrations, and to be more intentional in including the music, language, symbols, and traditional dress of our various ethnic and cultural groups within our liturgy, prayer and community celebrations.



SELECTED QUOTES

Most people come to Mass and then go home - this is not enough...Many people need/want connections between Sunday Mass. We need celebrations after Mass. We need to build community. (#0878, Mixed Group)

Sometimes I don't know my place in church so most weeks I just attend Mass and then I leave but there is a desire for more. There is a desire to make Sundays about the Lord and the church community. A good church is one where I see people there as family. Where I know people in the pews. And I WANT to share a meal and conversation with them after. (#0967, Female, 25-34)

The Catholic Church is big. That's why we need smaller core groups to be able to reach out and care for the congregation. So they know there is someone close, who will be there to 'walk with' them. Being involved and leading cell groups in community for over 20 years, I can testify how I grow in faith through this. (#0036, Female, 34-44)

The church needs forums for non-Catholics to be introduced to the church, its community, its teaching. The Mass, since it is for the initiated, is not suited to this purpose. What events or formation can we offer them? A talk that does not require pre-existing knowledge of the faith? A place where non-Catholics can voice their struggles, difficulties, or even objections to the faith, and where these can be listened to and debated without judgement? (#0600, Clergy Consultation)

We need spaces where we can bring unchurched people without it being weird. (#0317, CYP Lifted Young Adult Retreat)

We hope that the Diocese would begin having safe-spaces and direct outreach programs and projects that would be places where LGBTIQA+ Catholics and their families to be able to grow and flourish in faith together. (#0867, Group, 35-44)

What if the church could be that place where young Catholics (particularly) but all who suffer from this cross could be open about these feelings and desires (what modern culture calls being "out"), whilst being pastored in a way that helps them bear it in chastity and obedience to Christ? (#0944, Male, 35-44)

My understanding of a synodal church is a church that with the strength given by the Holy Spirit listens to others - and by others I am not restricting myself to the committed group of people who attend Mass regularly. The net that we should cast is much wider. The fish in our worldly sea are the majority of Catholics who no longer practise their faith, young people, our Islamic brothers and sisters, and the gay community, to name a few. (#0987, Male, 65-75)

I wish church fellas knew my name, then I'd always be there but they just ignore me, give me food and stuff but think I'm from the gangs. I just want to belong. (#0868, Indigenous Male, 19)

Understanding that some members of our community do not feel accepted by the church, hence a reluctance to attend regular worship. We feel that there are elements in the church who can be judgemental and scare other people away from participating. (#0303, Group of School Staff)

There is a need in the community to create awareness in the Catholic Church for families with special needs. And how to support them and remind them. That God is here for them! We are here for them. (#0956, Mother of 2 children with special needs)

We recognise that there is something broken or missing in our current liturgical structure and delivery - those who attend Mass come and go, and what we deeply crave is a personal, genuine connection and community. We have a deep need for belonging - especially those who've migrated, left their homes, left family, left the church. If we can come in our vulnerability and honour God in each other, we can build that body of Christ. At the heart of this is a desire for connection with each other. To respect the diversity of each story, and allow space for these needs to come through. (#0041, Male, 55-64)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

Acts 2:42-47

In what ways can our faith communities be sanctuaries and places of refreshment for all who come?

In what ways can we in our faith communities and ministries show that we recognise the face of God in everyone we meet?

How am I a bridge for those missing from our faith communities?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

1A.

To take active steps to build a culture of welcome, hospitality, and meaningful community across the Diocese.

1B.

To create a safe and welcoming environment for all, especially the divorced, people with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and members of the LGBTIQA+ community.

1C.

To intentionally seek out the gifts and talents of the members of our parishes to strengthen communion, participation, and mission.

1D.

To prioritise resources that support parishes and ministry groups in our work with families in all their diverse structures and circumstances.



THEME 2

A HUMBLE AND HEALING CHURCH

REFLECTION

“It remains our hope and prayer that all that we have done, are doing and will do, may help to bring healing to those so gravely harmed when in the Church’s care. As the Holy Father Francis reminded us, when addressing the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in April 2022: ‘This is the road that all of us must take: bishops, religious superiors, priests, deacons, consecrated persons, catechists and lay faithful. Each member of the Church, in accord with his or her proper state, is called to assume responsibility for preventing cases of abuse and to work for justice and for healing.’”

Five-year report from the Australian Catholic Church

(Five-year report from the Australian Catholic Church (ACBC and CRA) on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.)

“The Church in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you, the Aboriginal people, have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”

(Pope St John Paul II, Alice Springs, 1986.)

“My people are not threatened by silence. They are completely at home in it. They have lived for thousands of years with Nature’s quietness. My people today recognise and experience in this quietness the great Life-Giving Spirit, the Father of us all. It is easy for me to experience God’s presence.”

(Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Aboriginal Activist, former Catholic school principal, 2021 Senior Australian of the Year.)

“There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is suffering, too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways.”

(St Teresa of Calcutta)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

ACKNOWLEDGING THE HARM TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLAND PEOPLES

Some submissions acknowledged the harm done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by the Church and society, and that this continues to the present day as indicated by glaring statistics of disadvantage. The Church, with some notable exceptions, is not seen by Aboriginal respondents as a place where they feel welcome or safe, even if they are given “charity”.

DESIRE TO LEARN SPIRITUAL WISDOM FROM THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The desire to learn from the spiritual wisdom of the Aboriginal peoples was frequently and strongly mentioned in submissions. There were some voices that were anxious about incorporating Aboriginal practices into liturgy.

RESPONDING TO THE ABUSE OF THOSE IN THE CHURCH’S CARE

The sexual abuse of people in the care of the Church was named in a small number of submissions. It was recognised that the Church, including the church in Parramatta needs to continue to acknowledge this evil and to continue to make sure it is eradicated and that the Church is in need of healing.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR HEALING FOR THOSE WHO FEEL UNWELCOME IN OUR CHURCHES

There are women and men who, for a variety of reasons, feel unwelcome in our communities and churches. As well as those who have been divorced or from different family structures, those who identify as LGBTIQA+ expressed significant pain and hurt. Submissions called for our Church to reach out in the spirit of healing. Some have experienced hurt in their interactions with the Church. Others who had been long-

term members have found this hurt to be a key reason why they’ve left the Church.

DESIRE TO ADOPT A SIMPLICITY OF STYLE IN OUR CHURCH

A small number of submissions referred to their desire to see simplicity in lifestyle in the Church and in the vestments and dress of clerics. They suggest that a humble demeanour is central to being a synodal Church.

DESIRE TO WORK FOR AS AGENTS OF HEALING AND UNITY IN OUR CIVIC COMMUNITIES

A sense of working for the common good came through a number of submissions as part of our role as Church.





SELECTED QUOTES

Be conscientious when embracing our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, but not embracing their dreamtime spirits or spirituality when doing the acknowledgement of country, as it could suggest embracing their spiritual identity/paganism. (#0517, Mixed Group)

I've been part of the Aboriginal Catholic Services and their community for over 30 years and even though I've done other things and served in different Christian churches, I always come back to the Catholic Church because they've done more for me than other Churches. It's just like home. I can't do enough serving for them, I love it. They (the church/ACS) look after you, you meet so many different people and it's made me who I am today. I could have been in different places, but He's (the Lord's) always bringing me back here where I belong. The Church needs to go out there and find us mob out in community - go and find people who are out, who are shopping or doing things out there because they have a lot of stories to share and we have a lot to learn from them. (#0005, Female, 65-75)

The Indigenous peoples over thousands of years had observed the relationships of forces and fields that governed life and had a law, expressed through story, songs, and ritual, governing the preservation of these life-sustaining relationships. They experienced a spirit presence in everything. This wisdom was ignored by the so-called superior race of colonisers who killed so many of them and transformed their lands in unnatural ways. (#0079, Male Religious)

My submission is hope for a Church that walks together, embracing the diversity of our community in and outside our church walls. Let us be truly Gospel people, acknowledging that our tradition and sacraments are the sanctification of how we live our lives beyond the Sunday Eucharist. Let us acknowledge the sacredness and spirituality of this land as known by our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Let us always know the face of Christ in the other. Our future as Church is inclusivity and compassion. (#0041, Male, 55-64)

That the clergy have the courage to share their stories in truth with each other, grow in trust of each other, face into fears together, be healed of past hurts and to be courageous

in knowing that God has the world and Church in His hands. It's not a clerical show, but a partnership between God and all His people. That the vehicle of Listening Circles helps to grow reconciliation and synodality amongst us. (#1017, Priest)

How can we show that our Church is not self-righteous? How can we address the issues of Church abuses and same-sex marriage and therefore address the needs of the present time? (#0699, Parish Group, 35-44)

Making a ministry of healing... will be a real sign and action of care for all those who have been impacted by the scourge of abuse of children and vulnerable adults by clergy and others in religious settings. "Listening Circles" is one part of such a ministry, the Marriage Tribunal is another. Spaces and forums for truth-telling about any suffering are vital. Providing these, and welcoming lament and actions of remembrance, are other ways of being church that can help with healing, raise awareness, and increase vigilance for safeguarding the future of all our people. People who feel marginalised by church law or practices need welcome and healing too. (#0848, Female, 55-64)

With the greatest respect to the Indigenous people, pagan rituals should not be included in the Catholic Mass. That even the idea of this would be entertained is incredibly concerning. We can still welcome Indigenous Australians to participate in the Catholic Mass, and even join in various Ministries in the Church if they would like to. But we should not be including practices like smoking ceremonies, Acknowledgment of Country, and calling on the ancestral spirits within the Mass. (#1019, Male, 19-24)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

"But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him."

Luke 10:33-34

How might we as the Church in Parramatta, home to one of Australia's largest urban Aboriginal populations, listen with deep respect, walk humbly with Aboriginal people and welcome their contribution to our church?

What are ways we as the baptised can build up the unity of our local civic communities and contribute to the common good?

How am I a minister of healing in my community?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

2A.

To continue to offer, its unreserved and deepest apologies to those who have been betrayed through sexual, other forms of abuse by clerical and lay representatives of the Church, and to further processes for safeguarding, healing, and support.

2B.

That, given the high population of Indigenous people in our Diocese, we continue meaningful dialogue with local Aboriginal communities, to find opportunities to listen and share stories and learn from their wisdom and relationship with the land.

2C.

That, parishes and all diocesan agencies provide signage or other appropriate symbols that offer recognition and reconciliation by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and endorses "acknowledgement of country" at important community gatherings, including liturgical celebrations.

2D.

That, parishes will help build united and harmonious civic communities by working collaboratively with like-minded organisations and individuals for the common good.



THEME 3

A LISTENING CHURCH

REFLECTION

“Humility comes in the way we choose to listen and to wait. Indeed, the guiding disposition is one of receptive listening which is generous to the other who is speaking, even when one may disagree or be disconcerted by what is said or the way in which it is said. Such receptive listening is not in a rush; it will seek to discover the perspective, insight, truth, or pain of what is being said which often cannot be fully expressed by words.

A disposition of generous, humble, and receptive listening reaches out to the other and the reality that they live and experience. This will often be very different from our own so we must be prepared to go on a journey, to go into another country, one that is not familiar to us or where we may not feel all that comfortable. In some sense, this is the journey of the incarnation and we must be ready to find that Christ is already there in the world of the other, waiting for us to see Him.

With her son, Mary knows all journeys that we each must make. She is truly ‘Our Lady of the Way’. She, too, has learned how to listen and respond to the Word.”

(From Towards a Spirituality of Synodality, Vatican)

“Some people, in order to discover God, read a book. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above and below, note, read. God whom you want to discover, did not make the letters with ink; he put in front of your eyes the very things that he made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?”

(St Augustine of Hippo)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

LISTENING AND ENCOUNTER AS OUR WAY OF RELATING IN THE CHURCH AND BEYOND

Submissions expressed appreciation for the opportunity that the consultation and prayerful listening sessions provided. There was appreciation as this was a valuable way forward and a desire for people to be resourced in adopting this approach. Submissions requested that forums should be created to promote such encounter and listening.

For others, listening and encounter should embrace other faiths and religions.

LISTENING FOR THE QUIET VOICES IN OUR MIDST

There was a plea that our Church be more attentive to those whose voices are often not heard, such as those with disabilities and their families as well as those who hesitate to speak up. In addition, the voices of the vulnerable, especially the unborn, the sick, the elderly and the dying, need to be heard and protected.

LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF CREATION

The call to “integral ecology” to use Pope Francis’ term was scattered through submissions. Some submissions were considered and substantial. They linked creation with Aboriginal peoples and what we might learn from them.

Some submissions urged for stronger action in taking inspiration from Pope Francis’s landmark encyclical *Laudato Si’* and made practical suggestions related to this, that would not only contribute to action on behalf of creation but also simultaneously help build community, provide a way for people to connect with the Aboriginal community to learn about more sustainable and appropriate food nurturing. Other submissions spoke about being stewards of creation and suggested youth activities could be built around this.

Another submission called for an expanded view of who we are as Church before God: we must take up our responsibility as co-creators with God the Creator in caring for our world. In this, we can learn from the First Nations people how to find the sacred in creation.

The Synod was described as a chance to advance the growth of justice for the earth and its people. One practical suggestion was for the establishment of community gardens.

YOUNG PEOPLE

A quarter of submissions came from people under the age of 35.

These submissions spoke of the need for more opportunities for engagement, participation, and action for younger generations who have left the Church; on the other, some submissions from younger generations who have remained in Church asked for more deepening of understanding of Church and a greater clarity about what the Church teaches.

Some in the post-school age group advocated for a return to traditions that preceded the Second Vatican Council. Others in the same age bracket argued for a Church that was engaged at the margins. Along with their families and mentors, they also advocated for more spaces where their leadership can be acknowledged, nurtured, encouraged, and exercised within the Church.

In the submissions, young people were frequently mentioned. Often, they were named with a note of concern about the fact that they are absent from our churches.

Conviction, anxiousness, fear, and hope echoed in the perceptions that young people will become a lost generation when it comes to connection to Church if they are not meaningfully engaged in the present and immediate future.

The strong desire to connect to younger generations recognised the need for differences in methods for connection, from ensuring traditional practices remain unchanged to a radical transformation of how the Church engages the wider world.

THE SPIRIT AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

While some submissions spoke of contemporary society in negative terms, other submissions spoke strongly about the Holy Spirit being present and at work in contemporary society. They urged Catholics to rejoice in the saving work of God witnessed in the many positive developments, good works, and good people in our world, despite its secularism and the obvious negatives. The submissions suggest that the tension between opposition to the world, resistance to change, and recognising God at work in the world runs deep.

Being open to the signs of the times was seen by some as a key virtue rather than a fearful condemnation of everything that is contemporary. God was named as present and alive and close to us right now: God is present in our world as a loving companion.

The question was posed: how do we as a people of faith recognise the presence of God and the voice of the Holy Spirit in our world, our society, and our communities now?

How do we recognise God in the secular and rejoice in it?

EDUCATION AND FORMATION IN FAITH

A strong theme that arose from the submissions was a request and a perceived sense of the need for adult faith formation. Specific topics identified include spirituality, beginning with experience, prayer, biblical education, education in Church history and contemporary theology with a particular emphasis on the importance and impact of the Second Vatican Council for the Diocese. The experience of faith formation was perceived both as a tool for mission and outreach that can connect others to the Catholic faith as well as a necessary component to develop and equip those who are on the mission of sharing the Gospel.

The submissions highlight an awareness of the cultural context in which the Diocese exists as being permeated with a contemporary understanding of reality. In response to the call for adult faith formation, it is suggested that a

contemporary understanding of Catholic teaching is best done by building bridges between our Catholic doctrine and the reality of contemporary life in the Diocese. There was a desire expressed for education that brought together information and prayerful reflection on adults’ experiences.



SELECTED QUOTES

“The Lord hears the cries of the poor”: Catholics engage people of other faiths by first listening to them and being humble and respectful. As one of the larger faiths in Western Sydney, we are not ‘the poor’, so we need to question how we hear the cry of the refugees, Indigenous peoples, and brothers and sisters of different faiths. They ask for a voice; how do we hear their cry? Listening intently to another person witness their own faith is a wonderful way to learn about another faith beyond books. We need to arrange such personal interfaith encounters for Catholics in parishes, schools, and other church organisations. It’s okay to politely ask a person about their beliefs to gain a fuller understanding of their faith.

(#0722, Mixed Group)

That we have regular ‘structured’ opportunities and input into what listening really is and how to listen well.

(#0065, Male, 65-75)

Adult education – faith formation is deeply listening to scripture, sharing in Liturgy of the Hours – Parishes, (Lectio Divina) reading more current theology and thinking around what matters currently e.g. climate change – deep listening to our earth, First Nations people. (#0749, Parish Group, 35-44)

Instead of ignoring or lamenting the deaths and harm associated with climate change, we should see it as the voice of the Holy Spirit calling for new life in the coming together of our religious and scientific worlds. It is up to all of us, in communion with the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the Earth. Ecology is the science of revealing the ever- evolving workings of Creation. In Religion, we respond to that knowledge and attribute it to God’s Spirit of Life. (#1018, Male)

To be a diocese with a fundamental option to recognising, naming and giving thanks for God’s presence in the world; in the goodness of many people, in some of the key societal shifts and in the profound commitments many make for the care of people and creation. As a truly shared spiritual foundation of evangelisation. This could be a most faithful basis for announcing God and for building and renewing relationships of trust (starting with our trust in people and

our trust in the Holy Spirit at work ahead of us); relationships through which an invitational and welcoming Church may find surprises of grace and renewal. (#0873, Priest)

A church that is open to the signs of the times as a key virtue rather than a close-minded condemnation of everything that is contemporary. We live in the present where God is alive and closely with us right now as a loving companion not a controlling authority. (#0848, Female, 55-64)

“It’s very important also for the younger generation of the church to be actively involved, as they are the future of the church. Creating opportunities for young people to actively participate and contribute to the life of the Church, it’s vitally important. Involving them in the planning and decision-making process, allows young people to develop skills for the future. It can be as simple as making sure that everyone within the community feels welcome, especially new people who may join the church.” (#0862, Female, 16-18)

“Embrace the online networking culture: it is something to be used not repulsed. Take advantage of the culture. Prioritise bringing back to face-to-face. Recognise what is possible to be done online but don’t dilute what needs to be done face to face.” (#0321, CYP LIFTED Young Adults Retreat)

“We are experiencing a shift in culture in our Western civilisation, especially through the advancement of agnosticism, secularism, and technology, in which more and more young people feel marginalised.” (#0318, CYP LIFTED Young Adults Retreat)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

“The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

1 Kings 19:11-13’

What are some of the signs of God’s Spirit at work in our world and in people of our time? In what ways have you experienced the “cry of the earth”? (Laudato Si’)

What have young people taught you about ways of being Church? Where do you see God where others say God is absent?

Reflect on a time you felt truly listened to.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

3A.

To prioritise the allocation of resources towards sustaining existing youth ministries and co-creating new forms of engagement with young people within parishes, schools and beyond

3B.

To commit to working collaboratively with other faith-based and civic organisations at local levels to promote care for the earth and more sustainable stewardship of our common home across every parish, school, and agency, especially by joining the Laudato Si’ Action platforms.

3C.

To promote the rich and faith-filled multicultural diversity within the Diocese and explore ways to integrate cultural traditions in our parish ministries, while respecting our theological and liturgical principles.



THEME 4

A CHURCH RENEWED IN SPIRIT AND PRAYER

REFLECTION

“A synodal Church is a contemplative Church. It is a Church in which the scriptures and sacraments are central, for they are the school of a vision which is open to God’s salvific economy in all the realities of creation, human existence, and history. Synodality cannot be realised or sustained unless it is grounded in the prayer of the Church and the faithful people of God.

Prayer keeps the heart and the mind open to all that God is doing and desires for humanity and creation; it also nourishes and conforms the will so that we always seek to desire and act according to God’s will and salvific purpose. In this way, all prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to imitate Christ, whose whole being is a prayer.

The prayer of the Church, in sacrament and liturgy, is also an encounter with the living God who is active in and beyond time. It is a moment of disclosure in which we see what God has already done and who we are becoming.”

(From Towards a Spirituality of Synodality, Vatican)

“We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image disclosed through transformation.”

(St Clare of Assisi)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

REVITALISED AND PARTICIPATORY LITURGIES THAT REFLECT THE LOCAL POPULATION

A theme that clearly emerged was a love for, and recognition of, the centrality of the Sunday liturgical celebration of Eucharist. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a desire expressed by many for the Sunday liturgical celebration of Eucharist to be uplifting, attractive, and relevant to a wide range of people.

Mass was identified as a sign to promote union among all who believe in Christ and as a call into the household of the Church.

People from multicultural backgrounds request occasional opportunities to express their language and culture, especially within the liturgy.

Some submissions expressed lament that members of their family no longer participate in Mass. Suggested reasons and proposed solutions ranged from those who expressed a desire to return to the pre-Vatican II Mass while others observed that such a desire was the fruit of fear and ignorance.

A deep concern was expressed by a priest regarding parents who do not practise the faith presenting their children for sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, first holy communion, and confirmation. Ineffective sacramental preparation was identified as a way that children could learn hypocritical ways of acting if they followed the example of their parents.

IMPORTANCE OF LITURGICAL FORMATION FOR ALL

The need for liturgical formation to promote fully conscious, and active participation was a strong theme. Specifically, for the liturgy to produce its full effects, it was observed that the faithful need to be encouraged to accept the invitation to cooperate with the gift of divine grace offered in the sacrificial, thanksgiving celebration through instruction, reflection on scripture, symbol, and ritual.

A vital need to have greater resources and people spread across the Diocese to conduct formation in sacred liturgy, music, and art was identified.

It was observed that music and hymns for Mass need to promote and express the sense of communion for mission. It is recognised and affirmed that everyone's personal relationship with Jesus is central to our baptismal calling. It is also recognised and affirmed that Eucharist is a time for "we" as a synodal church, celebrating our shared faith and our commitment to the mission we share from our baptism.

Specific suggestions included a request that the Diocese provide more resources and training for musicians who lead liturgical music. Other suggestions included the use of paid professional musicians to lead liturgical music in parishes and that the Diocese create a database of high-quality liturgical music that is available to parishes.

HOMILIES THAT ARE BIBLICALLY BASED, INFORMED BY CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY, RELEVANT TO PEOPLE'S LIVES AND DIRECTED TO A PARTICULAR AUDIENCE

Another aspect evident in the submissions was a desire for priests and deacons to deliver short, relevant, understandable, biblically informed homilies in a manner suited to particular congregations.

NEED FOR A VARIETY OF PRAYER EXPERIENCES THAT STRENGTHEN THE INDIVIDUAL FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP OF EACH PERSON AND ARE AN ENTRY POINT FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT INITIATED OR FULLY ENGAGED

Access to Liturgy of the Word events such as Liturgy of the Hours and para-liturgical practices including Eucharistic adoration, communal Lectio Divina and occasions to draw on the prayer form of deep listening to our earth as practised by First Nations people. Other aspects identified included a recognition of the rich diversity of spiritualities and prayer forms practised in the Diocese. The spiritualities embodied by Religious Institutes

operating in the Diocese were also identified as influential. While part of their own ecclesial structures, it was also observed that Eastern Rite Catholic traditions, prayer forms and practices inform the spiritual life of Catholics in the Diocese. Specific examples include the Maronite, Melkite and Syro-Malabar communities.

A submission from clergy noted that non-Eucharistic prayer experiences might provide a more appropriate entry point for those coming to, or returning, to Church.

DECISION-MAKING AT PARISH, AGENCY AND DIOCESAN LEVEL THAT IS GROUNDED IN PRAYERFUL CONVERSATION AND DISCERNMENT

A spirit of prayerful discernment, such as has been experienced during the listening conversations in preparation for the Synod, was seen as a good model for decision-making at parish, agency and diocesan levels.

GROWING IN FAITH, SPIRITUALITY, PRAYER

As a local church carrying forward the work of Christ under the lead of the Holy Spirit, the Diocese of Parramatta is called to give witness to the truth. As a synodal Church the Diocese of Parramatta confronts honestly and fearlessly the call to a deeper understanding of the relationship between love and truth.

Not surprisingly, a commitment to faith and discipleship of Jesus Christ ran through all submissions. People responded to the invitation to reflect on how the church in Parramatta could become more synodal because their faith and the church are important to them.

Included in the submissions there were a variety of ways of understanding "faith". For some, the term "the faith" is understood as the body of beliefs and doctrine that is part of the Catholic tradition. Some responses conveyed the perception that the Church's teachings have been unchangeable through the centuries. Other responses reflected an understanding of "faith" as living, that is as a dynamic sense of the presence and action of God in human lives and faith as a relationship with Jesus. There was strong concern from a variety of submissions that faith should

be passed on fully to children, young people, and adults.

Many submissions spoke of their own journey of faith and a sense of personal faith in the person of Jesus that grows and changes as we grow and change as individuals within changing history and circumstances. There was a very strong desire through nearly all submissions to learn more about one's faith, to grow and mature in faith, and to be renewed in our individual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Analysis of the submissions indicated a desire to learn from Protestant traditions in terms of outreach methods and musical composition in the service of evangelisation. It was also observed in the submissions that, through supported and systematic outreach in inter-faith dialogue, the rites and practices of Islam and Judaism inform and enrich the practice of Catholicism in the Diocese.

Opportunities to participate in significant structured immersion experiences were identified as an effective method of promoting formation in faith and ongoing conversion.

In terms of parish structure, small groups such as Basic Christian Communities, Passionist Family Groups, and group programs like ALPHA were identified as excellent instruments for evangelisation, community building, and growth in faith within a community.



SELECTED QUOTES

Children learn about God through story – the scriptures, stories of those in their past and family, stories from their teachers at school, stories from ‘children’s liturgy’ and their friends.

(#0765, Parish Group, 35-44)

Music in its proper form in the liturgy assists in lifting one’s heart up to God as well as highlighting what is sacred.

(#0767, Male, 25-34)

Through my observations at various parishes, there has been a decline in the quality of liturgical music. This is due in part to a lack of resources and training, as well as a lack of appreciation for the importance of good liturgical music.

(#0767, Male, 25-34)

I would like to see the liturgical celebrations be relevant to the realities of life taking into consideration the third or fourth generation of the migrants’ disconnection from the practise of faith. (#0837, Priest, 55-64)

The Mass needs to be more interactive and matched to particular congregations. The Christmas Eve Children’s Masses are a good example of shaping the liturgy to the audience – this concept could be extended. (#0878, Group, 65-75)

Allow some cultural rituals as part of our Church practice e.g. the example of Aboriginal Mass is great; we can do the same for some cultural groups.

(#0419, Holy Family Parish, Mixed Group)

Any Liturgy is spoiled by those who want to take the Church back to pre-Vatican II days. This attitude seems to stem from ignorance and fear and points to the need for a good adult education program (which could be 10 mins at the end of each Sunday Mass) and a better standard of homilies.

(#0637, Female, Mixed)

Parents without attending Mass make the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, first-time Holy Communion and Reconciliation of their children almost meaningless. It also makes the “Sacramental Formation” of these Sacraments very ineffective. Even worse, the children simply learn hypocrisy with the examples of their parents. (#0839, Priest, 45-54)

My faith to me is a gift and a blessing which fills me with much fulfilment. (#0854, Female, 35- 44)

(Our) faith is not static. We strive for a deeper understanding and to be better and become closer to God.

(#0686, Parish Group, 45-54)

My submission is hope for a Church which walks together, embracing the diversity of our community in and outside our church walls. Let us be truly Gospel people. Let us acknowledge the sacredness and spirituality of this land as known by our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Let us always know the face of Christ in the other. Our future as Church is inclusivity and compassion. (#0041, Male, 55-64)

I dream of a church that is truly a supportive community of friends – men and women striving to live in the spirit of Christ. An honest and humble church that must realise it does not have all the truth and needs to collaborate with a variety of people in pursuit of the truth. A church that asks questions and welcomes the questioner. (#0732, Priest)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

“When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.”

Acts 2: 1-2,4

How does the Church in Parramatta reflect the rich diversity of Pentecost?

How do you manage tensions and differences in your faith community without being crushed by them?

What kind of hymns or music in the liturgy do you feel most at home with?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

4A.

To strengthen adult faith formation through regionally focused programs that draw on Biblical studies, rich and diverse Catholic spiritual traditions, Church history, liturgy, theology and Catholic social teaching.

4B.

To continue preparing and commissioning women and men in various liturgical ministries including lectors and acolytes. (Spiritus Domini 2021)

4C.

To enhance the experience of liturgy through resourcing and preparing those involved in the celebration of the Mass that inspires communion, participation and mission.

4D.

To re-affirm the importance and impact of the homily on our daily lives and explore synodal ways of enhancing its relevance to all.

4E.

To provide avenues for members of the faithful with opportunities to share their reflections at the appropriate time during the liturgy.



THEME 5

A CHURCH THAT REACHES TO THE MARGINS



REFLECTION

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men (and women) of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.

United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for everyone. That is why this community realises that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.”

(Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II, 1965.)

“The surest way to determine whether one possesses the love of God is to see whether he or she loves his or her neighbour. These two loves are never separated. Rest assured, the more you progress in love of neighbour, the more your love of God will increase.”

(St Teresa of Avila)

“There where you are, you will find God.”

(St Mary Mackillop, 1874)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Many voices called for our Church to follow the example of Jesus in reaching out to those not connected to the Church, the suffering, and those on the margins. There was a desire for the Church to be better at accompaniment - the practice of meeting people as they actually are, not as we might wish them to be, listening without judgement and patiently walking with them to help make known the presence of Christ and His Church in the midst of pain and brokenness, joy and hope.

THE STYLE OF “HOW” WE GO ON MISSION

There is broad consensus that as part of God’s mission, there needs to be some form of reaching out to the other. However, submissions had different ideas of what outreach should look like, with some conflicting views ranging from voices calling for more outreach and dialogue as a sign of God’s action in the world; to others proposing that the Church preserve itself from society as a way of being true to God’s mission.

Many submissions identified that mission is about who the Church is missing or forgetting to engage with, whether those people are baptised Catholics or people in the wider community.

Some submissions called for clarification in the pastoral focus areas that the Diocese should prioritise as a way to better coordinate the energy, time, and resources of parishes and agencies. This too was accompanied by tensions of “how” we go about discerning specific priorities, knowing that these decisions may run the risk of leaving other pastoral areas unattended.

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND MARGINALISED

Many voices expressed that the core of the Christian faith and its credibility is dependent on how it responds to people in need, especially those who are least fortunate.

Furthermore, a desire for faith-filled action in the world that accompanies the poor and marginalised was seen by some as a way to re-engage young people and others who feel distanced from the Church.

Submissions noted with gratitude that the Diocese of Parramatta and the leadership of Bishop Vincent were known for standing with the poor and marginalised. A number of these submissions also commented on their hope that this way of being Church would continue into the future of the Diocese.

Submissions expressed a heartfelt call to go out to groups such as the elderly, First Nations people, the homeless, refugees, and asylum seekers. There was an urgent appeal for the care of creation to receive renewed focus as core to the Christian life. It was recommended that the Diocese continue to make a priority of supporting refugees and asylum seekers who make their home in this area and to strengthen our efforts in that regard. Submissions urged that:

“Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, those overly mortgaged and financially struggling families in western Sydney, be more creatively served by parishes. Having the focus of parishes turn away from inward looking to outward looking to the needs of the surrounding community.” (#1017, Priest)

THE INTERCONNECTION OF PARISH AND SCHOOL IN REACHING OUT

There is further recognition that schools and those within their network are seen as a current context for mission and sharing of the Gospel message with the school staff and families who are part of the school community.

Many who work in schools are conscious that the school is often the only expression of ‘Church’ that students and their families encounter, offering safety, accompaniment, and growth in an integrated life of faith. Some submissions implied that this same outreach to students and their families is not experienced in parishes.

There is a post-school observation that there needs to be more provisions and opportunities made to engage those who graduate from

Catholic schools in ongoing faith development.

There were some perceptions of concern about Catholic education and the religious education curriculum, with some submissions suggesting that it is the only experience of Church (as expressed above), to others questioning its integrity to Christian teaching and values. This latter referred to misperceptions about Catholic school curricula and issues relating to gender fluidity and gender preference.





SELECTED QUOTES

In that vein, the mission of the Church is to side with the poor, the downtrodden, the marginalised, the voiceless. This includes railing against some of the structural issues that contribute to people being in this situation and having an inquiring heart as to whether we are part of the reason that has led to this. The Church's mission should be to walk with people in their lives as they actually are, not as we might wish them to be. (#0872 Group, 19- 24, including Christians and others from different faiths)

I am 92 years old and have been a parishioner at [my parish] (all my adult life) and have been involved in nearly every ministry in the Parish, particularly pastoral care. Recently I had a prolonged period of illness, and I was saddened that I received no pastoral care during that time. From being a person who lived and breathed (this parish) I now feel alienated from the Parish. (#1002, Female, 92)

We are in this liminal stage of life. Our society is becoming increasingly secular (e.g. Calvary Hospital). As leaders, we need to find new ways to “protest” or “influence” without the “siege mentality” we are witnessing. (#0034, Group of Diocesan Executives, 45-75)

As Church we need to do more to help those from war-torn countries, to bring about peace in those lands. Where is the cry of the Church in those lands to bring about epace? What is our Church doing when boat people fleeing war drown in boats? (#0415, Mixed Group)

The schools are for all people. More people from other traditions choose [Catholic] schools because they see something of goodness and behaviours that are positive. This gives us the platform to tell our Gospel story and offering simply to the wider community. (#0326, Group of Diocesan Executives, 45-75)

I worship at both the Roman Catholic Church in Baulkham Hills and also the Hills Maronite Church. I see the difference in belonging especially with the Roman Catholic Church, given its different cultural backgrounds but I see it attempting to bring the community together. In the Maronite Church they have the ease of people worshipping within the same culture and so the sense of belonging just is. However I see it as a challenge to the Maronite community to bring other cultures into their church just as the Latin Rite already is working towards. (#0970, Female, 65-75)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

“A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!”

Mark 1:40-41

If Jesus were to walk through our suburbs, shopping malls and our parks, how would he respond to those with mental illness, to young addicts and to elderly homeless women?

Who do you see being moved with pity and reaching out a hand to those on the margins?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

5A.

To strengthen our commitment to respect and protect the dignity of human life, from conception through to old age and natural death.

5B.

To strengthen our commitment to welcome, support and advocate on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers and work together in partnership with current and new agencies

5C.

That each of our local communities will take steps to reach out and identify the greatest needs of their people and prioritise and allocate resourcing to address those needs.

5D.

To engage experts in research, social sciences and organisational best practice in exploring emerging models of pastoral care, leadership and ministry.



THEME 6

A CHURCH WALKING TOGETHER



REFLECTION

“In the prayer, reflection, and sharing prompted by the fundamental question, it is opportune to keep in mind three levels on which synodality is articulated as a constitutive dimension of the Church:

- the level of the style with which the Church ordinarily lives and works, which expresses its nature as the People of God that journeys together and gathers in assembly summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel
- the level of ecclesial structures and processes, determined also from the theological and canonical point of view, in which the synodal nature of the Church is expressed in an institutional way at the local, regional, and universal levels
- the level of synodal processes and events in which the Church is convoked by the competent authority, according to specific procedures determined by the ecclesiastical discipline.”

(For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission, Preparatory Document for the Synod on Synodality, Vatican, n.27)

“In this spirit of mission, dioceses, eparchies, and parishes are to commit to building friendly and cooperative relationships with other Christians, communities of other religious traditions and people with no religion, and to promote and engage in the four forms of interreligious dialogue: dialogues of life, action, theological exchange, and religious experience.”

(Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Dialogue and Proclamation, 1987, n. 42)

“Each one of you has to be God’s microphone. Each one of you has to be a messenger, a prophet. The church will always exist as long as there is someone who has been baptised...Where is your baptism? You are baptised in your professions, in the fields of workers, in the market. Wherever there is someone who has been baptised, that is where the church is. There is a prophet there. Let us not hide the talent that God gave us on the day of our baptism and let us truly live the beauty and responsibility of being a prophetic people.”

(St Oscar Romero)

“Believe in the whisperings of God in your own heart.”

(St Mary Mackillop, 1868)

A SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

LEADERSHIP: STYLE AND NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

Understandings of leadership were expressed differently with a strong emphasis on leadership in parishes that was relational, invitational, and collaborative. The nature of leadership was shaped by people’s understanding of “church” and was described in many submissions as leadership for a church that is open, welcoming, courageous, and outgoing.

A few submissions expressed a yearning for a clergy-centred church, but more typically, submissions mentioned the need for renewal of clergy in their understanding of their role in the Church as working with all the faithful as co-responsible disciples. The baptismal quality of all the faithful was stressed over any status coming from a role. Some submissions lamented attitudes that diminished the actions and opinions of lay people in a parish.

Submissions referred to leaders “in touch with Jesus Christ”, strong leaders who would be energetic in working for the salvation of souls, on the one hand, or in leading their community out to engage with the needs of society, on the other. Several submissions asked for leaders to communicate in simpler, more direct language. Individual submissions suggested that strong leadership is needed, to speak out without fear against issues such as abortion, voluntary assisted dying, “propaganda of the LGBT, and the globalist agenda”.

LEADERSHIP: A BROAD UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP

Generally, submissions reflected an understanding that leadership was the responsibility of all the baptised, with ordained and unordained people holding formal leadership roles. There was a call for wider involvement in formal leadership of people from all walks of life by providing opportunities for the faithful to take on leadership roles, contribute their ideas, and actively participate in the life of the Church. Submissions

suggested that the Diocese could target future leaders especially, among women, younger people, people from multicultural groups and Aboriginal members of the community.

LEADERSHIP: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The role and visibility of women in leadership was mentioned quite frequently. Women should be involved in decision-making, offered in-depth study in pastoral care and theology, and that female pastoral associates should supported through professional development. The exclusion of women from decision-making was described as an obstacle to the Church’s wellbeing.

Among recommendations for increased visibility of women in formal leadership and decision-making in the Diocese, one submission made a detailed suggestion relating to the preparation of women in pastoral care and leadership.

LEADERSHIP: FORMATION AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL IN LEADERSHIP

There was strong reiteration that formation and education are critical to the development of leaders, ordained or otherwise, who can lead the Church to become what it is called to become. However, the need for formation and ongoing education in the humility and spirit of synodality were stressed especially for those already ordained and those preparing for priesthood and the diaconate.

Deliberate changes were seen as essential to shift the culture of the church towards greater synodality in:

- Seminary formation and ongoing formation for priests and deacons
- School leadership and teacher formation
- Curia and Diocesan management formation
- Pastoral Council members, Chairs of Pastoral Councils
- Pastoral Associates and Parish Coordinators in liturgy, youth, sacraments, etc.

Some suggested areas of training and formation included:

- Leadership
- Synodality and spirituality
- Personal and professional development and interpersonal skills and relationships
- Academic studies in interreligious dialogue and introduction to the world religions prominent in Western Sydney for seminarians.

LEADERSHIP: SUPPORT FOR THOSE IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Submissions recognised that the burden of administration and compliance created challenges for priests in pastoral initiatives. There was a plea to find processes to manage the necessity of administration and compliance.

Priests who have come from overseas to share their pastoral service in the diocese requested more support and more deliberate and systematic induction with ongoing follow- up, support, orientation, and preparation. Deliberate monitoring, coaching and accountability processes were seen as useful for local priests as well.

Another submission called for ways that priests might support each other to create more of a community of ordained.

GOVERNANCE

Submissions recommending Diocesan-level structures, policy or process tended to be quite specific in response to a cluster of issues. These included:

GOVERNANCE: DIOCESAN, DEANERY AND PASTORAL COUNCILS

The Diocesan Pastoral Council, in collaboration with agencies and individuals in the Diocese, to initiate a process of dialogue in developing resources and ideas specifically aimed at supporting synodality in parishes.

Diocesan programs that focus on the themes of

a) becoming a more humble, healing and merciful Church, b) becoming a more missionary Church that goes to the margins

and c) becoming a more listening, co-responsible, and inclusive Church as outlined by Bishop Vincent.

Diocesan, Deanery and Pastoral Councils to make the call to be more synodal a key agenda item in their meetings.

Parish Pastoral Councils need to have credibility - supported by the priest, empowered by their community, effective in their ministry, competently chaired.

Investigate, fund, and pilot the role of parish (or deanery) pastoral care coordinators as focus people to audit and respond to people at the margins of our communities.

GOVERNANCE: STRUCTURES FOR CO-RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

Can we create mechanisms within our governance structures that highlight the baptismal leadership of all as part of the body of Christ? Or expressed differently, structures for co-responsible decision-making that involve a meeting of all those affected by a decision (e.g. decisions re parish property, church design).

Structures, processes, and management approaches that reflect the best of contemporary theory and practice that enhance the synodal journey without becoming an end in themselves. Good processes can support the growth of synodality.

Financial transparency: financial reports and reports on mission priorities issued by each parish and the Diocese, at least annually, so that the community knows what is going on.

GOVERNANCE: PROCESSES FOR LEADERSHIP

Ongoing expectation of professional development, processes for accountability and support for everyone in ministry and parish roles, including priests, deacons, parish council members, parish ministry coordinators. Good processes can support the growth of synodality.

GOVERNANCE:
HOLY SPIRIT SEMINARY IN THE LIFE OF
THE DIOCESE

Make the seminary more central to all parishioners and find best ways to “bring the Diocese into the seminary.”

GOVERNANCE:
OTHER STRUCTURES FOR INCLUSION

Consideration of recasting the Diocesan Interfaith Commission as an Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission.

WALKING IN PARTNERSHIP:
GREATER COLLABORATION ACROSS
PARISHES AND DEANERIES AND THE
DIOCESE TO MAXIMISE RESOURCES

A number of submissions recommended gaining shared benefit by parishes combining for some activities (e.g. social justice activities).

Similarly, greater communication and coordination between agencies within the Diocese (such as Holy Spirit Seminary, Catholic Care, Catholic Education, Community Ventures) were seen as offering potential for greater fruitfulness.

WALKING IN PARTNERSHIP:
PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PARISH,
FAMILY, AND SCHOOLS

This was a very strong recurring theme. Suggested collaboration included parent workshops, encouraging family involvement in religious activities, parent-led prayer groups and engaging parents in school decision-making processes. A mutual recognition that more concrete and intentional connections between parish and school should be further developed, with specific professional roles appointed to facilitate this connection.

WALKING IN PARTNERSHIP:
PROACTIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH
THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS

Submissions included suggestions to:

- Work collaboratively with people of other faiths, such as Muslims and Hindu groups for the good of the community through service, such as food-drives, helping in critical incidents, as well as more generally. In particular, interfaith cooperation on climate issues and refugees was highlighted.
- Share resources for education about each other’s faith and beliefs, such as acknowledging the holy days in other religions.
- Ministry to those in interfaith marriages, pilgrimages to other places of worship, a dedicated space on the Diocesan website for interfaith news and information and overall, in a secular society, to recognise that the respect for the divine in other faiths can encourage and strengthen us were other suggestions.
- Engagement with the community in which we live.

WALKING IN PARTNERSHIP:
PROACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH
OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

The existing Diocesan Interfaith Commission was applauded by a few submissions. It was noted that while “ecumenism is an important dimension of the church’s mission, at present, the Diocese of Parramatta does not seem to have any institutional structure for this apostolate” and this should be addressed.

With respect to these themes of greater interfaith and inter-Christian collaboration, a small number expressed concern that such interaction could undermine individuals’ Catholic faith.





SELECTED QUOTES

Leaders should come from all stages and walks of life. Fundamentally, leaders should encourage and model positive and healthy relationships, despite their individual differences. (#0042, Female, 35-44)

I am dismayed on hearing the views at recent Synod workshops and gatherings, where participants favour a “return to tradition”, meaning a model of church which is clerical, fundamentalist, and exclusive. (#0041, Male, 55-64)

Will we make deliberate changes to our seminary and clergy formation, school leadership and teacher formation, Curia and Diocesan management formation that will help move this culture shift towards synodality from thought leaders to all the faithful? (#0842, Female, 35- 44)

Like Jesus, the priest must take a greater role in listening to discerning the needs of the parish community. (#0521, Mixed Group)

The clergy have a responsibility to listen to the laity and empower them to be active and take the church forward. The authoritarian model is outdated and no longer relevant. The model of servant leadership is Christ-centred and needs to be at the core of our church. (#0300, Parish Group, 65-75)

Break down the barriers of ignorance, clericalism, and pride that keep laypeople at a distance from decision-makers. Train parish pastoral council members to recognise and act on the barriers that reduce full representation of parishioners, and to meet in ways that foster synodal decision-making. Monitor decisions to see where and why Parish Priests ignore or act against the advice of their pastoral council. Provide a forum where differences can be addressed. (#0848, Female, 55-64)

At the very least the Diocese can only benefit from having women willing to undergo formation in leadership and pastoral care with a view to serving in the Diocese in some capacity. There are structures such as Diocesan and Deanery Councils that could greatly benefit from both men and women being formed in leadership and pastoral care grounded in tertiary theological-ministry study. (#0060, Priest, 65-75)

I feel we need strong shepherds who are not afraid to speak the truth and be a voice of reason. We as a congregation need to be armed for the spiritual war that is upon us. Many of us are facing trials in our day-to-day lives. A lot of us are facing (issues) in our workplaces, and are often a lone voice. (#0053, Female, 35-44)

Clericalism is still very much part of parish life. (#0380, Mixed Group)

A church that is truly a supportive community of friends - men and women striving to live in the spirit of Christ, not a doctrinaire, authoritarian institution, recognising some institutional structures are necessary but understood as provisional and whose leaders should be regularly critiqued and changed. (#0732, Priest)

Ecumenism is an important dimension of the church’s mission. At present, the Diocese of Parramatta does not seem to have any institutional structure for this apostolate. (#0701, Mixed Group, 55-64)

Structures, processes, and management approaches that reflect the best of contemporary theory and practice can enhance the synodal journey. If we are trying to be synodal and participative, and ordinary administrative processes are poor, then the larger goal can be lost. (#0011, Female)

Collaboration with parents and guardians is essential in ensuring the transmission of good Catholic teaching. (#0857, Male, 25-34)

People of all faiths are called to care for the poor, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry. We could band together with people of different faiths to address social justice and environmental issues while also engaging with each other. As the Synod will shape the direction of the church in Western Sydney for years to come, it is important that it reflect on and direct our Catholic missionary responsibility to engage with the wider multicultural, multi-religious society of Western Sydney among whom we live, work, study, play, and pray. (#0722, Mixed Group)

FOR PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION

“Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side.”

Luke 24:13-15

When have you encountered the risen Jesus in your life journey?

Who are the people today walking away despondently from Jerusalem?

As the Synod comes to conclusion, what are your hopes for a Church that walks together?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

OUR DIOCESAN SYNOD RESOLVES:

6A.

To provide ongoing formation that enhances a culture of synodality for those preparing for ordination, clergy and all others in leadership roles in parishes, agencies, ministries and councils.

6B.

To engage experts in ecclesiology for facilitating discussion on models of parish and faith community to better respond to contemporary pastoral care, leadership and ministry issues.

6C.

To provide women with opportunities for mission, formation and education in a variety of leadership roles in the Church, supported by appropriate resources.

6D.

To institute, where absent, a pastoral council at the diocesan, deanery and parish level (including ethnic chaplaincy), as a principal form of collaboration, dialogue and discernment (Christifideles Laici #25) in accordance with the law of the Church.

6E.

To continue to promote interfaith and ecumenical dialogue and shared endeavours among our parishes, schools, agencies and ministries.

“Behold I am doing
a new thing”

Isaiah 43:19

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all involved in the Synod. This landmark event for our Diocese would not be possible without the honest and prayerful listening and discussion from thousands across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Thank you to Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv for your leadership and vision to humbly walk amongst all of God’s People. Thank you to the Synod Preparatory Commission, the Synod Secretariat, the Synod Writing Group, the Synod Working Team, and all staff and volunteers who have charitably given their time and talents.

NOTES

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parracatholic.org/synod2023